

DANESBURY HOUSE

MRS. HENRY WOOD

Condensed for School Reading
by David Frew, B.A.

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PREFACE

Nearly seventy years ago Mrs. Henry Wood's novel *Danesbury House* won the prize offered by the Temperance Society for the best story dealing with temperance; but the human interests in the story are so profound, and are presented with such simplicity, sincerity, and directness, that no reader can help even now being attracted, in some ways, fascinated, by it.

Mrs. Wood, at the very time education was beginning to be strangled by the introduction of a vicious system of examination, grasped with perfect clarity what is now considered the most modern view of the essence of education. In the novel she insists that true education is chiefly spiritual and ethical; that its purpose is to make a man, not merely a machine for producing certain things, or a storehouse for the records of certain facts and observations.

She declares that the preparation for life, the making of a man or a woman, begins with earliest years, and insists, throughout the book, on the awful importance of childhood's experiences and impressions; urges, in fact, the eternal truth of the advice: "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Not only is the story in this condensed form told in Mrs. Henry Wood's own words, but its development, the order of events, and the steps by which the evil is eradicated and a measure of success attained, are presented in the order in which they occur in the original. What has been omitted may justly be considered secondary. The life story of the members of the Danesbury family and of the effect on them of their early training has, as far as possible, been preserved intact.

D. F.

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DANESBURY HOUSE

CHAPTER I

THE MISTAKE—THE DINNER-TABLE

It was a winter's afternoon, cold and bright, and the large nursery window of Danesbury House looked out on an extensive and beautiful prospect. Seated at it, occupied in repairing some fine lace, was a smart young woman of twenty, an upper maid, sensible and sharp-looking, with quick, dark eyes, and a healthy colour.

"There's the baby, Glisson," she suddenly exclaimed, as a child's cry was heard from the adjoining room.

Glisson rose, and stepping into the night-nursery, brought forth little William Danesbury, a lovely child, nine months old. She sat down with him on the low chair: he seemed somewhat fractious, as infants will be, on awakening from sleep; and Glisson laid him flat upon her knee and rocked the chair backwards and forwards.

Presently a fit of coughing took the baby. The nurse put him to sit up, and patted his back, but he coughed violently. He had had a bad cough for more than a week past, but it was getting better. Glisson rose and looked on the mantelpiece for his cough mixture. She could not see it.

"Perhaps it's carried into mistress's room."

She flung off, not in the best of tempers, the child coughing in her arms.

"Have you found it?" inquired Jessy, when she returned.

"Found it? of course I have," replied the nurse. "There shall be a stir about this: how dare anybody come and carry off my nursery things? It was in Mrs. Danesbury's closet, put amongst the spirits of camphor, and the magnesia, and the other bottles."

Mrs. Glisson poured out a teaspoonful of the mixture, and gave it to the child. Jessy, meanwhile, was thinking. All in a moment—she could not tell how or why—a doubt flashed over her. Could Mrs. Glisson have overlooked the bottle? Letting her work fall, she started up, and with one bound cleared the space between the window and the mantelpiece. Sure enough there was the missing bottle, pushed out of sight behind a child's toy.

"Oh, Nurse, what have you done?" she uttered. "Here's the baby's medicine behind Miss Isabel's doll's house! What have you given to him?"

The nurse looked confounded, and turned her gaze from the bottle in Jessy's hand to the bottle in her own. They were precisely similar in shape and size. Jessy snatched the strange bottle from her, uncorked it, and smelt it. She turned deadly pale.

"Mrs. Glisson, as true as that you are alive you have killed the baby! This is the laudanum."

"It can't be the laudanum bottle!" shrieked out Glisson.

Jessy laid her two hands upon the woman's shoulders and hissed forth: "*You are not yourself, and you know it: you are not in a state clearly to distinguish one bottle from another.*"

There was not a moment to be lost. She tore down the stairs. In the hall she encountered a manservant and laid hold of him.

"The baby's dying, Ralph. Fly for Mr. Pratt; don't let him lose an instant."

Ralph, after a prolonged stare of bewilderment, started off, down the steps. Jessy followed him, and called again to the man:

"Tell him, Ralph, the baby has had a dose of laudanum given him, in mistake for his cough mixture."

To the right rose the Danesbury Works. Jessy gained the spot, flew through the outer grounds and passages, and into the private room of her master. Mr. Danesbury, a tall man of commanding presence, with nobly intelligent features and earnest blue eyes, was standing by his fire, engaged with two gentlemen.

"Oh, sir," she panted, "there has been a sad accident at home. Mrs. Glisson has made a mistake, and given the baby the wrong medicine."

"Wrong medicine?" uttered Mr. Danesbury.

"She missed his cough mixture, sir, and she found it, as she thought, in my mistress's closet, and she gave him a teaspoonful. It was not his mixture, but the laudanum."

Mr. Danesbury, with a word of apology to the gentlemen, hastened from the room. "You should have sent for Mr. Pratt, Jessy," he next said.

"I have, sir; I did not lose time—Ralph is gone for him."

Mrs. Danesbury was away from home. She had left Eastborough with her two elder children the previous day, to pay a visit to London.

Mr. Danesbury, the first shock over, began to reflect that it might be better to send for his wife; who, whatever should be the issue, would be the more satisfied to be at home than away. He determined to dispatch Thomas Harding, one of his foremen, who had been in the works many years. "Jessy," said Mr. Danesbury to the girl,

“go back to the factory, and tell your uncle to prepare for an immediate journey to London. After he is ready he must come here to receive my instructions.”

A chaise was ordered from the “Ram”, and was soon at Danesbury House. Mr. Harding, equipped for the journey, was already there, and had taken his orders from his master, and was now standing on the steps outside, talking with Jessy in an undertone. As the chaise rattled up and turned round, he got inside, and just at that moment Mr. Danesbury came out again.

“Mind, Harding, how you break it to Mrs. Danesbury. Be as cautious as possible. Mr. Pratt does think there may be a little hope, tell her.”

“I’ll do it in the best way that ever I can, sir,” Harding answered, the tears rising to his eyes with earnestness of feeling.

Whilst that chaise was nearing the end of its forty-mile journey, a merry party had assembled round a well-lighted dinner-table in a handsome house in Bedford Row, the metropolitan locality where so many men of the law congregate. Mr. and Mrs. Serle sat at either end of the dinner-table. By the side of the former, who was an eminent solicitor, sat Mrs. Danesbury, an elegant woman of thirty years, with beautifully refined features and dark eyes, thoughtful and expressive. Opposite to her, in a drab silk gown, sat Miss St. George, who was the sister of Mrs. Serle, and lived there because she had no other home. Next to Mrs. Serle was a young man, Walter St. George—he was in Mr. Serle’s office, and had been invited to dinner to meet Mrs. Danesbury; and the middle of the table was occupied by four children—two little Serles and Arthur and Isabel Danesbury. Mrs. Danesbury was first cousin to Walter St. George, and both of them were more distantly related to Mrs. Serle and her sister.

"But, sir," suddenly cried Arthur Danesbury, leaning forward that he might see Mr. St. George, "you have not told me about the Tower."

Mr. St. George could scarcely take his eyes from the boy. Fair, with a broad, white, intellectual forehead, his features gave promise of the same high order of beauty that distinguished his father's, and he possessed the same large, clear, earnest blue eyes. He was in his eighth year; his sister two years younger. A servant placed a glass of porter by his side, and recalled him to his dinner.

"Oh, water for me, if you please," said the child.

"Your children are not going to drink water!" exclaimed Mrs. Serle, when she saw the water placed for them. "This cannot hurt them, Mrs. Danesbury; it is only porter, not stout."

"Thank you," replied Mrs. Danesbury, "they never take anything but water."

"I never heard of such a thing as punishing children in that way," cried Miss St. George.

"It is no punishment," was Mrs. Danesbury's reply. "They are not accustomed to it, and therefore do not wish for it. Confine a child's drink to water, and he will obey the law of nature, and grow up loving the water. I believe that it is of the utmost importance that he should be allowed to do so. Many grown persons will say, 'I cannot bear water; I could not drink it!'"

"I could not," interrupted Mr. St. George. "I never did drink it, and I am sure I could not begin now."

Mrs. Danesbury smiled, for she saw they all could have joined in his words, and it illustrated her theory. "Just so, Walter," she remarked; "you were not allowed to drink water when your tastes, for good or for ill, were being formed. As our tastes are trained in childhood, so will our after-likings be."

"But, Mrs. Danesbury, if you keep your children—

let us say the boy—to water so long as you have control over him, you cannot expect that he will confine himself to water when he becomes a man.”

“I do not know that,” she answered: “I trust to be able to implant in him other wholesome training besides that of drinking water; I mean, touching his own responsibility of action. But, whether he shall confine himself to water or not, I shall have the comforting consciousness of knowing that I have done my duty by him, in bringing him up to like it.”

“Madam,” interrupted a servant, entering the room and addressing Mrs. Danesbury, “there’s a gentleman below, asking to see you. He said he came from Eastborough, and his name was Harding—Thomas Harding.”

The words seemed to electrify Mrs. Danesbury, and she turned pale as death, as she started from her seat. “What can be the matter?” she uttered. “Something must be amiss with my husband or my child!”

She quitted the room, and hurried to the one where Thomas Harding was waiting.

“Tell me the worst at once,” breathed Mrs. Danesbury. “Something is amiss with Mr. Danesbury! He has not been caught in the machinery?” she gasped, the dreadful thought occurring to her.

“Dear lady, pray don’t alarm yourself: it’s nothing so bad as that. Mr. Danesbury is quite well, and it was he sent me to you. Little Master William is poorly, and he thought you might like to know it.”

“Sit down, Mr. Harding,” said Mrs. Danesbury; “what is the matter with him?”

“Well, ma’am, Mrs. Glisson lost his cough mixture; and she found it, as she thought, and gave him some; but it turned out to be a bottle containing some tincture of opium. Mr. Pratt was there directly with his emetics;

but the master bade me come up here and tell you, ma'am, thinking you might like to go home."

The news surprised Mrs. Danesbury and perplexed her—apart from the shock and grief. "How did you come?" she inquired.

"I posted up, ma'am, in one of the chaises from the 'Ram'. It is at the door."

"Order fresh horses to it instantly," she said, leading the way from the room. Mr. and Mrs. Serle were standing outside. She burst into tears as she gave them the news.

"Going down at once!" uttered Mr. Serle. "But how are you going?"

"Mr. Harding posted up. There is no difficulty."

She had been walking up the stairs as she replied, too anxious to lose a moment. She went to say farewell to her children, who should remain for the present. The ready tears rose to Arthur's great blue eyes.

"Why do you leave us here, Mamma? it won't be nice when you are gone. When will you come back?"

"The beginning of the week, I hope, Arthur. My darling," she added in his ear, as she held his face to hers, "Mr. and Mrs. Serle may press you to take beer and wine, but you will remember that I wish you not to do so. And tell Isabel what I say. Touch neither."

The chaise, with its fresh horses, drove to the door, and Mrs. Danesbury entered it, scarcely giving time for the step to be lowered.

CHAPTER II

A CHAISE O'ERTURNED

Mrs. Danesbury naturally felt impatient for particulars; and pressed Thomas Harding to relate them, as they sped on their way. He was enabled to do so, having had them detailed over to him at length by Jessy.

"I cannot comprehend it," she remarked. "I should not be so much surprised had it been one of the other servants; but for Glisson to go to the closet, and to commit such an error, is incomprehensible. It is as though she had acted in her sleep. Does it not strike you as being very extraordinary, Mr. Harding?"

"Ma'am," he said, "Jessy mentioned to my wife that Glisson drank."

"That she—what?" uttered Mrs. Danesbury.

"Ma'am, that Glisson drank. Took sometimes more than was good for her."

Mrs. Danesbury was silent, utterly confounded.

"Nearly every night she has one big tumbler of hot gin-and-water, sometimes more; besides drinking plenty of ale at supper—too much, in fact, Mrs. Glisson being allowed the strong ale at that meal, while most of the other servants take beer. Jessy is a clear-sighted, keen girl, and is not likely to be deceived. She has seen Glisson with a black bottle to her lips in the day-time, and believed it contained gin."

"But, were it true that Glisson takes gin, how can it have escaped my detection?" urged Mrs. Danesbury. "The smell would betray her."

"She has got a trick of sucking things. Sometimes it will be a bit of camphor, sometimes a peppermint-drop; and, of course, they take off the smell of anything else."

Mrs. Danesbury remembered to have smelt peppermint and camphor when the nurse had been talking. "I wish Jessy had said this to me," she observed. "I should not have quitted home and left the child in her charge."

"I wish she had, ma'am, as things have turned out," responded Thomas Harding.

They had been travelling at a high rate of speed all the way, and had changed horses several times. Now they were nearing Eastborough; and soon the lights in the town began to be visible. It was nearly midnight—a cold, frosty, starlight night. A steep hill descended to the hollow, and at the top of the hill was the turnpike gate.

The gate was closed. The postboy stopped his horses and hallooed; the door opened, and the keeper came out. He opened the gate; he did not fling it back, but kept it in his hand, and went stumbling across the road with it. The postboy urged on his horses; but Giles somehow loosed his hold of the gate; and, though he went on himself, he let the gate swing to again. It struck the nearest horse.

The horse, a nasty-tempered animal at all times, began to plunge and kick; that startled his fellow, and, in spite of the efforts of the postboy, they sprang forward and dashed madly down the hill. Mrs. Danesbury shrieked, and rose up.

"Ma'am, ma'am, don't get up, don't lean out!" implored Thomas Harding. "Be still, for the love of life!"

"This is certain death," she wailed. "Oh, my children! My God, I can but commend them to Thee! Do Thou make them Thine, and keep them from the evil!"

The chaise, in that same moment, struck against the

lower stone abutment of the narrow, awkward bridge and was overturned. Mrs. Danesbury's head fell on the ground, and the chaise settled upon it.

How Thomas Harding extricated himself he never knew. Beyond being shaken and a little bruised, he was not hurt. The terrified horses had plunged till they freed themselves, and started off with part of the broken shafts dangling after them. The postboy was lying without motion.

Thomas Harding saw at a glance the dreadful situation of Mrs. Danesbury. At that moment the church clock struck twelve; and the door of a public-house, the "Pig and Whistle", beyond the bridge, at the entrance of the town, was thrown open; and a stream of warm light and a crowd of toppers came forth.

"Hilloa! Help! Hilloa!" shouted Thomas Harding, running towards them. "Help here."

"Blest if it ain't Harding!" exclaimed one. "What's the matter, sir?" he cried, as his foreman came panting up.

Mr. Harding explained, as well as he was able for his haste and agitation.

Between them they raised the chaise, and extricated Mrs. Danesbury. She lay motionless. Harding sped off through the town to Mr. Danesbury's, whilst others ran for the surgeon, who was not found at home, but at Danesbury House. The postboy was sitting with his back against the side of the bridge. They gently raised him, and walked him about a few steps. No limbs were broken. He shook himself, and speech came to him.

"That there Giles ought to swing for this," were the first words that broke from him.

"What had Giles to do with it?" questioned the chorus of voices.

"He were as drunk as blazes. He were so drunk, he

couldn't push the gate back, nor hold it back, and he let it come swing agen the horses."

"Did that start 'em off?"

"It just did start 'em off. They took, as you may say, one leap from the top of the hill to the bottom, not a bit longer it didn't seem, and the chaise caught the nasty awk'ard bridge, and we went over."

Soon voices and rapid footsteps were heard, for several people were approaching. Foremost of them came Mr. Pratt, the surgeon, Thomas Harding, and Mr. Danesbury.

"A moment, if you please," cried out the surgeon authoritatively. "Stand back, all of you; I can do and see nothing, with you crowding round. Mr. Danesbury, will you also allow me a moment here alone? Harding, you stay and hold the torch."

Mr. Danesbury's eyes fell on the postboy. "Are you hurt, Jim?" he asked kindly.

"A bit shook, sir; I don't think it's no worse."

"How did it happen? Mr. Harding says the gate touched the horses."

"Come swinging right agen 'em, sir; Giles were so drunk he couldn't hold it back."

Mr. Pratt had arisen, and was at Mr. Danesbury's elbow. He passed his arm within that gentleman's, and drew him away from the crowd; halting at a certain part of the bridge, and apparently looking out over the dark and gloomy water.

"What is it?" said Mr. Danesbury; "why do you bring me here? Have you ascertained the nature of the injury?"

"Oh, my dear friend!" cried the surgeon, "I know not how to tell you what I must tell. One consolation is, that she did not suffer. She must have died instantaneously. Her neck is broken."

Mr. Danesbury let fall the surgeon's arm. He half fell, half rested on the parapet of the bridge, and a low wail of utter anguish went forth on the night air.

CHAPTER III

THE NEW MRS. DANESBURY

The coroner's inquest was held on the appointed day. The verdict returned was, "Manslaughter against Roger Giles, he having been, at the time of its act, in a state of drunkenness."

He was committed to prison to await his trial. The little child, William Danesbury, had recovered from the effects of the laudanum.

Eastborough owed what importance it did possess to the Danesbury Works, sometimes called the Iron Works. The business had once been of small account; but the then proprietor of it, John Danesbury, raised it into importance. His two sons, John and Philip, were taken into partnership with him, the firm then being altered to that of "John Danesbury & Sons". The elder of those sons, John, was the one introduced to the reader. He was now the sole proprietor, for his father and brother had both died, the latter, Philip, a young man, leaving a widow. Mr. Danesbury had married a Miss St. George, a lady every way worthy of him, and her dreadful death was a far greater shock to him than the world suspected.

Thomas Harding was exceedingly attached to Mr. Danesbury, and with cause. He had served his father; he now served him, and enjoyed his full confidence. Harding was vexed at being the depository of this secret about Glisson; but he hoped the tragical end of her mistress, caused remotely *through her*, might so tell upon

her that there would no longer exist reason to betray her to Mr. Danesbury.

"Glisson took on dreadfully," said Jessy, one day that she was at the Hardings'.

"Then perhaps she'll abandon the habit altogether," returned Thomas Harding. "Jessy, girl, never suffer a word to escape you of what has been: give her a chance of redeeming herself."

"She's safe for me," replied Jessy. "The children are coming home to-morrow," she continued. "Some lady is bringing them, and we fancy she is going to remain—as governess, or housekeeper, or something of that."

Danesbury House was a handsome white mansion, surrounded by fine grounds, with a smooth lawn sloping from the front, its elevated site causing it to command extensive and beautiful views of the neighbouring country.

On the morning that was to witness the return of the children a lady approached the house. It was Mrs. Philip Danesbury, the widow of Mr. Danesbury's brother. She enjoyed a handsome income from the business, and resided near. She was in Yorkshire, her native place, when the recent fatal event happened, and had now been home a day or two. While she was in the nursery talking, she observed her brother-in-law approaching from the factory, and went downstairs to meet him.

"John," she began, as soon as they were in the sitting-room, "Glisson says there's a lady coming here to be in Isabel's place."

"Not in Isabel's *place*," interrupted Mr. Danesbury, in a tone of pain. "No one can fill that. Do not say so."

"Well, you know what I meant, John. Unfortunately, no one ever can fill it, in any sense of the word. But there

is somebody coming to rule the household and manage the children," proceeded Mrs. Philip Danesbury. "Who is it?"

"Miss St. George, Mrs. Serle's sister. She has offered to remain here a little while."

"A 'little while'! That means an indefinite period, I suppose."

"No time was mentioned. It was Mrs. Serle who wrote and proposed it. I thought it exceedingly kind and considerate of her, and accepted it gratefully."

"But whatever made you accept it, all in such a hurry?" continued Mrs. Philip, in her hasty way.

"I accepted it for the children's sake. What objection do you see to Miss St. George staying here—for I think I detect you have an objection?"

"A minute, John: answer me a question or two before I answer yours. What age is this Miss St. George?"

"I do not know. I have a general idea that she is not young. I once saw her at Mr. Serle's, but retain a very faint recollection of her. I fancy she is older than Mrs. Serle; and that she lives with her because she has no other home."

"There, that's quite enough; you have most fully answered me," impetuously returned Mrs. Philip Danesbury. "Take care of yourself, John."

Mr. Danesbury asked Mrs. Philip to remain to dinner.

"I will," she replied, "and I shall let Miss St. George know, unmistakably, that I am Mrs. Philip Danesbury, the nearest kin you and the children have, and quite competent to direct the affairs of Danesbury House, where direction may be necessary, without her assistance."

Mrs. Philip untied the crape strings of her bonnet as she spoke, and ran upstairs again. She was somewhat given to be dictatorial, but she was a thoroughly sincere, good woman at heart.

The baby had been brought in. The sleeves of his embroidered white frock were tied up with black silk ribbons, and he wore a broad black sash.

"Poor little motherless darling!" uttered Mrs. Philip, taking the child and clasping him to her. "I wish Papa would give you to me, my little godson," she murmured, covering his sweet face, so lovely in its rosy flush, with kisses.

In the midst of this, the travellers were seen approaching. It was a clear, frosty day, and they were walking up from the "Ram", where the stage-coach stopped. The two children, in their sombre black attire, were accompanied by two ladies, one of whom was in deep mourning, the other in sligher.

"Why, there's two of them!" unceremoniously uttered Glisson, who had made her way to the window.

"Miss St. George has put on deep black to be like the family, as she is to stay here," decided Mrs. Philip; "and the other must be Mrs. Serle."

She eyed Miss St. George critically as she spoke. Glisson did the same. A thin, shortish, vinegar-looking lady, with cold, light eyes, a sharp nose, and flaxen hair.

"Five-and-thirty, if she's a day, and a soured woman," was Mrs. Philip Danesbury's mental comment. "Won't she be having a try at John?"

The visitors were shown into the drawing-room, a spacious apartment opening to the lawn. Mrs. Philip Danesbury entered, and welcomed the two ladies gracefully, as though she were the mistress of the house.

"To whom have we the honour of speaking?" demanded Mrs. Serle.

"Madam, to the sister-in-law of Mr. Danesbury, the aunt of these dear children. I am Mrs. Philip Danesbury. This, I presume, is Miss St. George, who has kindly proffered us a visit."

"I proffered it for her," smiled Mrs. Serle, who appeared all complaisance. "I fancied Mrs. Philip Danesbury's residence was in Yorkshire."

"I have been there for a long visit. We appreciate your kindness, and shall be happy to render Miss St. George's visit agreeable to her," was the somewhat frigid answer of Mrs. Philip.

"Harriet!" exclaimed Miss St. George, the moment she was alone with her sister in the chamber to which they had been shown, "I shall go back with you; I shan't stop here."

"You will do no such thing, Eliza. You are come, and you must remain. She is not mistress; she does not live here."

"But she comes armed with full power to do as she pleases in the house; there's no doubt of it. She'll be here for ever."

"Nonsense. Stop and feel your way. You will supersede her if you try. And if you don't, you are only where you were before."

"What an exceedingly fine man Mr. Danesbury is!" exclaimed Mrs. Serle; "I should call him one of Nature's true nobility. The child, Arthur, will be like him."

"And what a handsome house," returned Miss St. George. "Everything so well appointed and comfortable."

"Ay, plenty of wealth here, Eliza. If you can succeed in establishing a firm footing, you will be fortunate."

Mrs. Philip Danesbury, meanwhile, was looking about for Arthur, who had disappeared. She found him in the little room where Mrs. Danesbury used to assemble her children for the ten minutes after breakfast in the morning, to read to them their Bible stories.

"My darling, don't sob so; be comforted."

"Aunt Philip, I shall never see her again! I never

thought it could be quite true till I came home. Oh, Mamma! Mamma!"

His sobs nearly choked him.

"Arthur, do you know why I am sure your mamma is happy, and has gone to the rest promised to the people of God?"

"Because she was good," he sobbed.

"No, my darling. She was good—better than most people are; because she had always taken God for her guide. She taught you to do so, Arthur."

"Yes," answered the child, and he gradually grew calmer.

He presently said: "How could that Giles let the gate fall against the horses?"

"Because he had got horribly tipsy, my dear, and could not hold it back."

"Would it have happened if he had not been tipsy?"

"No, of course not. But for Giles's drinking that night, your mamma would have been alive and well now."

The child gave his head that very decided shake which in him expressed firm, inward resolve.

"No, Aunt Philip, I will *never* drink. How long is she going to stay?" he added.

"Who, my dear?"

"Miss St. George."

"I cannot tell. Don't you like her?"

"Not much," answered Arthur. "She told me she was going to be with us instead of Mamma."

Summer came round, and with it Isabel's birthday. Some children were invited to dinner, and Mrs. Philip Danesbury was expected to preside; but she did not come, and they sat down without her, Miss St. George occupying the place opposite Mr. Danesbury; when Mrs.

Philip was there, she always took it herself. At the period of dessert, Miss St. George filled glasses of wine for the children, including Arthur and Isabel.

"But we never drink wine," remonstrated Arthur.

"That's no reason why you never should. On such an occasion as this it is necessary. What would Isabel say if you did not drink good wishes to her?"

"I'll drink them in water," said Arthur.

"You have a very particular prejudice against drinking wine, Arthur," said Mr. Danesbury, smiling.

"Papa, I promised her that I never would. And Isabel knows all about it, that I never mean to, and she said she never would. Miss St. George knew it."

"Promised whom?" said Mr. Danesbury.

"My dear mamma. It was the last word she said to me before she left that night; and I promised her."

He laid his head on the table, overcome by the remembrance of his mother, and sobbed aloud. It seemed that Mr. Danesbury was likewise overcome, for he hastily rose and quitted the room for some minutes.

"Do not attempt to give the children wine again," he said to Miss St. George when he returned.

Mrs. Philip Danesbury had received news from Yorkshire that her mother was alarmingly ill, and she had been busy making preparations to start thither on the morrow morning.

It was summer when she went, it was winter when she came back; and the very first news to greet her on her return was that Eliza St. George was to be Mr. Danesbury's second wife.

She wrapped herself up the next morning, and set off in the snow to see Mr. Danesbury. Not going to the house, but seeking him at the Works. He was in his private room.

"John," she said, when greetings had passed, and she

warmed her hands over the hot blaze of the fire, "you are going to marry again, I hear."

"I believe so, Maria."

"What did I tell you? That, if you did not take care, she would play her cards and win. And she has done it!"

"Maria, you were always prejudiced against Miss St. George. You were before you saw her."

"Admitted. Because her coming down here, in the way she did, looked to me a suspicious proceeding. Now, I am sure it was one. But when I came to see and know Miss St. George, my prejudice did not lessen. I wish you had chosen anyone else, for the children's sake."

"To tell you the truth," he answered, in a low tone, "I was, in a manner, drawn into the marriage. But of course this must never go beyond you."

"Drawn into it! I do not understand."

"It seems the neighbourhood got talking about my attention to Miss St. George. One day Mrs. Serle arrived here in a desperate bustle. She sought an interview with me, and said Eliza had written to her that she was miserable; that after what the neighbourhood had been pleased to say, she should never hold up her head again in happiness, and that of course she must leave Danesbury House, and they might as well tear her life from her, as tear her from me and the children. Mrs. Serle assured me things had been said, and asked what I could do in the dilemma; hinting that for a reproach to have been cast on Isabel's cousin would have proved a bitter grief to *her*, had she been in life. Then I began to think that, as I had almost determined to marry again, I might as well take Miss St. George as anybody else, and settle the neighbourhood that way. So I told Mrs. Serle that the matter had better be ended in that manner."

"And they snapped at it!"

"They accepted it," said Mr. Danesbury.

"It was all a planned trap!" vehemently spoke Mrs. Philip. "Mrs. Serle's coming down, and saying what she did, was a planned trap to draw you in. When is it to be? I hear Miss St. George is in London."

"She returned with her sister. It is to take place immediately."

And it did so. And Eliza St. George became the second Mrs. Danesbury, to her own unequivocal self-gratulation and delight.

It was on a Tuesday afternoon, and just a week after the wedding. Glisson and Jessy were seated in their old room, the nursery; Glisson pacing about angrily, in what Jessy called "a temper". On the carpet sat William, playing with some toys; and Jessy was trimming a cap for herself with white satin ribbon.

"I have no patience with you!" Mrs. Glisson burst forth. "Decking yourself off for a woman that's not fit to stand in your poor dead mistress's shoes; not fit to tie 'em for her, or to buckle on her garters. You are as bad as she is. I wonder you can reconcile yourself to stop in the house after such a change! I wonder the servants downstairs can do it!"

"You are stopping yourself," said Jessy.

"Because I am forced to it. Could I go and leave that baby"—pointing to the unconscious little fellow on the carpet—"to her mercies? When I meet my poor dear mistress face to face in heaven, what would she say to me if I had abandoned her child to the dislike of a deceitful stepmother?"

There was a pause, till Jessy, who was then standing at the window, broke it. "Here comes Mrs. Philip Danesbury."

Mrs. Philip Danesbury came into the nursery. "Well,

Glisson; well, Jessy," cried she, as the servants rose. "You have thought me lost, no doubt, but it is nine days since I stepped outside the door. Willie, what has Aunt Philip got?"

The child had risen and ran to her. "There," she said, giving him a pretty little toy in sugar, "Sister Isabel sent that for Willie."

"When are the children coming home, ma'am?" put in Jessy.

"When their father asks for them," replied Mrs. Philip. "He, and—and—his wife—will not be here before Friday."

"Oh, won't they though!" retorted Glisson. "They are coming to-day, ma'am. It's a black day for me, I know that."

"Jessy," said Mrs. Philip, "Miss Isabel requires a clean tucker or two: will you put them up?"

Jessy left the room. "You must try and make the best of it, Glisson," Mrs. Philip continued, when they were alone. "It would never do, you know, for you to leave William."

"That's the only thing that's keeping me: nothing else in the world, and so I told master. It was one day after Miss St. George had gone; the children were out, and master was dining alone. After dinner the bell rang for the baby, and I took him down, and master put him on his knee. 'Glisson,' said he, turning to me, 'I suppose you have heard that there is going to be a change?' 'Yes, master,' says I, 'and I'd rather have been swallowed up by an earthquake than have heard it; and I'm thinking that I shan't be able to stop. There's only one thing keeps me, sir,' I said, 'and that's this precious child: I must stop to put myself between him and harm, knowing that I sent his poor mother out of the world.' 'Stop with him always, Glisson,' whispered master, as he gave the

child back to me, and I saw that his eyes were wet."

At this juncture in came Jessy, all excitement. "Ma'am! here they are! Glisson, they are come!"

"Who are come?" demanded Mrs. Philip, considerably startled, as she hastened to the window in the wake of Jessy. "Not Mr. and Mrs. Danesbury?"

But it was. Mr. Danesbury's chariot, with post horses, was sweeping up the gravelled drive. He was in it, and his new wife sat beside him. Mrs. Philip was at a nonplus. "I would not have had it happen so for anything!" she exclaimed. "I will not be here to receive her. Were they expected so early as this?"

"They were expected to dinner, ma'am; but not just yet," answered Jessy.

CHAPTER IV

TRAINING

Few persons could be less alike than the late Miss St. George and the present Mrs. Danesbury: they were as two separate and distinct women, especially in the matter of temper, and Mr. Danesbury could not fail to observe that they were. The servants experienced it to their cost, and Isabel also to hers.

Isabel and her new mamma did not get on well together, and yet Isabel was a sweet-tempered child, remarkably lady-like and graceful. Mr. Danesbury knew that his wife was in delicate health, and he believed that must be the reason of her being so cross and irritable. A gentlewoman was taken into the house as Isabel's governess. "It will be less trouble for you," was the excuse he offered to his wife. Mrs. Danesbury seemed inclined to rebel: she did not want a governess in the house. She said Isabel

TRAINING

might be sent to a first-class school; but Mr. Danesbury was perfectly firm upon the point, and his wife saw that he was, and submitted. Arthur was away at school, having been placed out in the spring. Strictly speaking, it could not, however, be called a school—a clergyman received half a dozen select pupils, and Arthur made one.

With the coming winter, a boy was born to the second Mrs. Danesbury. He was named Robert, and Glisson was constituted his nurse, the care of little Master William being turned over to Jessy. But before this could be effected, Glisson and her mistress nearly came to a battle-royal. This unpleasantness—and in Glisson's opinion it had been nothing but unpleasantness for the past year—did not tend to improve Glisson's patience, nor yet her self-restraint.

One evening, when spring was drawing on, and the infant was three or four months old, Mr. Danesbury being absent on a journey, Mrs. Danesbury retired to her room early, not feeling well. She heard the baby cry an unusual length of time, so throwing on a shawl, for she was partially undressed, she proceeded to the night-nursery. There sat Glisson, fast asleep. Mrs. Danesbury took up her struggling, crying child, and turned to the nurse.

"Glisson!" Glisson took no notice.

"Glisson! what is the matter with you? How dare you sleep like this, when the child's screaming?"

Glisson rose up from her seat, staggered, and sank down in it again. Mrs. Danesbury rang the bell violently, and Jessy came running up.

"Jessy," cried her mistress, "do you see this woman? She has been drinking. She is drunk."

Jessy made some incoherent reply. Mrs. Danesbury, giving the infant into Jessy's hands, proceeded to rummage

the room, and found the gin bottle. Her passion rose with the sight.

"What am I to do with you, you wicked, drunken woman?"

"No more drunk than you, ma'am," hiccupped Glisson, who was just well enough to be abusive. "Who says I'm drunk?"

"Jessy," cried Mrs. Danesbury, "did you see her drinking it?"

"I saw her drink her ale at supper," replied Jessy.

"I say, did you see her drink *this*?" sharply repeated Mrs. Danesbury, touching the glass with her foot.

"No, ma'am. I have not been upstairs."

"If you had seen her, and suffered her to drink herself into this state without informing me, I would have turned you away in disgrace along with her," said Mrs. Danesbury. "This must have been a nightly habit."

"I do not come into this room at night," was Jessy's reply. "I have nothing to do here."

"You shameless creature!" continued Mrs. Danesbury, turning to Glisson. "Is not your good strong supper ale enough for you, but you must drink gin upon it? Shameful!"

"Highty tighty!" broke out Glisson; "gin upon ale? don't other folks do the same? You have your strong ale, ma'am, at supper, and you can take your spirits after it: sometimes it's gin, and sometimes it's brandy; but you don't go to bed without one of 'em."

An unseemly quarrel ensued. Glisson was sullen and insolent, Mrs. Danesbury violent. She at length struck Glisson in her passion, and ordered her to quit the house then and there.

Glisson refused to go. She was as obstinate as her mistress, and it ended by her remaining; Jessy taking charge of the infant for the night.

Glisson was in her sober senses the next morning, penitent and low-spirited. Mrs. Danesbury, cold, sulky, and unforgiving, stood over her while she packed her boxes, and then ordered one of the men-servants to show her out of the house.

Three or four mornings afterwards, Mr. Danesbury returned. His wife immediately gave him an account of Glisson's misconduct; truth to say, an exaggerated one. For, now that she had had time to cool down, she doubted whether her husband would approve of so summary a mode of dealing with an old and respected servant. Mr. Danesbury was proceeding to the factory afterwards, when he met Jessy and little William.

"Jessy," he exclaimed, "what a strange thing this is about Glisson! How came she to get into such a state?"

"It was very unfortunate, sir."

"Did she actually strike her mistress?"

"Oh no, sir," hastily answered Jessy, "she did not do that. It was my mistress struck her, sir."

"Did she not strike your mistress?"

"No indeed, sir, she did not so far forget herself as that. She was abusive, and said things which she would not have said had she been sober."

"Where is she gone?"

"No one seems to know where. She has not been seen since."

Walking home from morning service were Mr. Danesbury, his daughter and her governess, and his four sons—Arthur, William, Robert, and Lionel. The time has gone by, reader, and Robert Danesbury, the young infant, is now eight years old, and his brother Lionel is seven. Two children only had the second Mrs. Danesbury.

Mrs. Danesbury did not attend church that day, she

had one of her nervous headaches and remained in bed.

Arthur had returned from keeping his first term at Cambridge: though intended to be only a commercial man, the very highest educational advantages were being afforded him. To say that Arthur was growing up good-looking would not be saying enough; a more noble-looking youth, both in face and form, it was impossible to conceive.

Mrs. Danesbury had risen when they got home, and they sat down to dinner, which was always taken early on the Sunday. Arthur and Isabel drank water as was customary, but beer was supplied to the three younger boys. When the cloth was removed, a full glass of rich wine was poured out for them; it was the usual Sunday's treat.

Mrs. Danesbury, the present, *would not* bring them up to drink water. Mr. Danesbury did not interfere.

But there is other training required from a mother to a child besides that desirable one of confining its drink to water. Few are more deeply impressed with the responsibility resting on a mother, or more earnestly anxious for her children's welfare, than had been the first Mrs. Danesbury: few, let us hope, are more careless of it than was the second. I speak of welfare in the highest sense of the term—that they would be great and good here, and inheritors of eternal life hereafter. Isabel, Mrs. Danesbury, never omitted to take her child Arthur, from the time he was two years old, to herself for ten minutes after breakfast. She would put him on her knee and read a little, and talk to him about God, and about his own childish duties—what he must do, what he must not do. Generally speaking, but not so invariably as in the morning, for engagements sometimes prevented her, she would take him so in the evening. She rarely failed to hear him his prayers herself. Before she was taken

from him Arthur's mind, naturally a tractable one, had been moulded *well*, and he had learned the fact that as his conduct was, so would his prosperity and happiness be. The clergyman with whom he was placed proved an admirable seconder of the principles of Mrs. Danesbury. Isabel had been taken by her mother in like manner, and her governess was a Christian gentlewoman, so that she was also fortunate. But the other children, how was it with them?

Eliza, Mrs. Danesbury, was certainly anxious for the welfare of her children; but all in a temporal point of view. She hoped they would be grand and rich men, and rise to eminence in the world. If the boys did pick up a glimmer of anything better, they got it from Mr. Danesbury, who would often gather them around him on a Sunday evening, read to them, and talk seriously to them. Mrs. Danesbury was fidgety about their appearance—that their dress should be handsome, always in order; she was anxious that they should be polite in manner, and there it ended. William, of course, is included in these remarks; but William had one advantage not enjoyed by Robert and Lionel—he was often at Mrs. Philip Danesbury's. And that lady suspecting, or rather knowing, the state of affairs at home, strove to supply to him the part of a mother. You will gather from these remarks that the young Danesburys were growing up without acquiring any moral safeguard within themselves to keep them from the evil temptations of the world.

One day when Arthur was at home he took William to his room, talked to him, and told him he wished he would confine his drink to water.

“I don't like water, Arthur. Beer is nicer.”

“But you are aware—you have heard—that our own mamma wished us to drink it; and you would so very much oblige me by doing so.”

So the next day at dinner William requested the servant to give him water, not beer. He made a face over it, however, and put it down as soon as tasted. After dinner, William whispered to Arthur that he was sorry, but he never should be able to drink the "nasty water" with dinner. Mrs. Danesbury had given him the taste for stronger things.

On this Sunday, as they sat at dinner, Arthur was describing to them his university life. He appeared to have formed a close friendship with a young man of his own age, the Honourable Reginald Dacre.

"Those college friendships do not continue in after-life, Arthur," observed Mr. Danesbury.

"Mine with Dacre will not, I dare say," replied Arthur. "He will be a peer of the realm; I, but Arthur Danesbury of the iron works. But it is very pleasant while it does last. I like him excessively, and keep him out of mischief."

"You keep him out of mischief!" laughed Mr. Danesbury.

Arthur laughed also. "It is true though, sir."

CHAPTER V

ROBERT AND LIONEL

Several years again went by after the date of the last chapter. Arthur was now in partnership with his father, receiving a small share of the profits. The promise he had given of high excellence in earlier years had not been frustrated now that he had arrived at manhood. He was indeed all that the most anxious father could wish. Upon one point Mr. Danesbury's opinion proved a correct one—the fleeting nature of college friendships.

Arthur's intimacy with Mr. Dacre ended with his college life. They both quitted Cambridge at the same period. A letter or two had passed between them, and there it appeared to close. William was in London, articled to an eminent firm in Parliament Street—civil engineers. The younger children, Robert and Lionel, had left school this midsummer, and their callings in life were to be decided on.

Mrs. Danesbury was seated in her drawing-room, waiting tea and getting cross. The first to enter the room, and encounter Mrs. Danesbury's impatience, was Isabel. No longer a girl, but an elegant young woman, with a refined countenance and winning manner.

"Where have *you* been?" sharply began Mrs. Danesbury.

"Is it late? Oh; but the others have not come in, I see. I have been with Aunt Philip. Aunt Philip has had bad news, Mamma," continued Isabel. "Her brother is dead, the Rev. Mr. Heber. He caught a fever after visiting some of his poor parishioners, and died. He was ill only a week."

"What is to become of his family?" cried Mrs. Danesbury. "That clergyman was as poor as a church mouse."

"It is a serious question. He has left no money behind him. Aunt Philip is going to invite the two daughters here."

"With her! To stop?" sharply questioned Mrs. Danesbury.

"I suppose they will stop," replied Isabel. "They will have no other home now. Their mamma died more than a year ago. Aunt Philip says they are admirable girls, everything that could be desired."

"I thought you were not coming in to-day," was Mrs. Danesbury's fractious salutation when her husband entered. "Where's Arthur?"

"He is gone to Mrs. Philip Danesbury's," was the reply.

"Isabel says that brother of Mrs. Philip Danesbury's is dead. Of course all his children are unprovided for."

"The two daughters entirely so; but the sons are in a way to get their own living, or soon will be. The eldest is keeping his last term at Oxford, and will be in orders immediately. Mrs. Philip Danesbury is going to invite her nieces to live with her. It is fortunate she is able and willing to receive them."

"Have you seen the boys?" again began Mrs. Danesbury.

"No. But I am sorry to say that I have heard of them. Fox has been to me to complain. They have been over there this afternoon, damaging his hedge, and giving him insolence and abuse."

"I am sure they did not," fired Mrs. Danesbury. "Abuse and insolence, indeed! Who is Fox that he should dare to come to you with such a complaint?"

"He made a worse complaint than that," returned Mr. Danesbury. "He says Robert was not sober."

"Absurd!" retorted Mrs. Danesbury. "I dare say Fox was not sober himself."

"They seem to have set themselves against coming into the works: and you uphold them, Eliza."

"Yes," answered Mrs. Danesbury. "I wish them to choose professions: not business. Robert wants a commission purchased for him."

Mr. Danesbury looked up. "A commission!" he uttered. "Whatever put that in his head? I cannot sanction it. I very much disapprove of it."

"He says he will be nothing else," said Mrs. Danesbury, carelessly. "Why should you object to it?"

"We are at peace," said Mr. Danesbury, "as we have been for many years. An officer of the present day passes

his time in idleness: my sons must not so pass theirs."

As Mr. Danesbury spoke, Robert and Lionel entered. Good-looking youths both, but as yet less noble in form and feature than their brothers, Arthur and William. Mr. Danesbury informed them of the complaint of Fox, the nurseryman. "He says you, in particular, behaved shamefully, Robert."

"The vile old sinner! It's a lie. Papa——"

"Sir!" reproved Mr. Danesbury: "you forget yourself. No ill language before me. Tell me what really happened. The truth, mind; for I shall investigate this. In the first place, what had you been taking?"

"Taking!" echoed Robert, who had inherited his mother's crabbed temper.

"To drink. Fox says you were not sober."

"I'll wring Fox's neck if he comes to you again with tales about us. If anybody was not sober it was himself. Fox was in such a passion he could neither see nor hear."

"As I said," interposed Mr. Danesbury. "I have always found Fox a civil, respectful man, and I know you must have provoked him most unjustifiably to induce him to be otherwise. The fact is, as I have been telling your mamma, you must be idle no longer. Now that it is decided you do not go to school again, you must choose what you will be. I should prefer you both coming to the works."

Robert Danesbury turned up his nose.

"I intend to go into the army, Papa."

"And I want to be a doctor," cried Lionel, who was a good-natured, pleasant, nice lad.

"Anything but that, Robert," said Mr. Danesbury. "Choose anything but that."

The question was not settled that evening. Robert Danesbury was thoroughly obstinate over it; he laughed

contemptuously in his sleeve at his father's arguments about leading a useful life; and at last he said that if he could not have a commission bought, he would enlist.

Mrs. Danesbury's system of training had begun to tell. Why was Robert Danesbury so eager to enter the army? That he might serve his country? Not at all: but he had acquired a passion for a red coat, and for a life of pleasure and idleness.

But Robert Danesbury, helped by his mother, carried his point, and Mr. Danesbury consented to apply to the Horse Guards for the purchase of a commission. Lionel was placed with Mr. Pratt, the surgeon at Eastborough, to go through the necessary steps and grades towards becoming a physician. It was arranged that he should pass his evenings and nights at home. Mr. Danesbury and Mr. Pratt were close friends, and the latter was pleased to receive Lionel.

Mrs. Philip Danesbury's nieces arrived, Mary and Anna Heber, the one grown up, the other several years younger. They were refined, gentle, good girls. Danesbury House, with the exception of its mistress, fell in love with them at first sight.

CHAPTER VI

VISCOUNT TEMPLE

Gay doings were expected in Bedford Row, in the house of Mr. Serle, for his eldest daughter, Charlotte, was about to be married to Walter St. George. The latter was now a partner, the firm being Serle & St. George. Miss Danesbury was there on a visit: she was to be one of the bridesmaids.

It was the evening of a grand dinner-party. Mr.

Serle came running up from the office, all in a hurry.

"Harriet, can you make room for another at dinner?"

"What an unreasonable question!" ejaculated Mrs. Serle, after a pause of surprise. "Of course I cannot."

"It must be done somehow," returned her husband.

"It can't be done. I never heard of such a thing. We are just a dozen. Who wants to come?"

"One of our best clients. Lord Temple. There are writs out against him," said Mr. Serle, dropping his voice to a whisper, "and he dare not show his face in the street. The house is being watched now for him, and if he stirs out he'll be arrested. Here he must stop until the thing is settled. I have told him we will give him a bed; and to-morrow he must remain quietly upstairs with you and the girls, and not come in view of the office."

"Well then, he must dine with us," concluded Mrs. Serle, balancing her exultation at showing off a real live lord to her guests against the inconveniences it would cause. "Is he old or young?"

"Young. What has that to do with it? Wait a minute. Mrs. Serle; Lord Temple."

A tall, slender young man of distinguished bearing entered—a very aristocrat. His face was pale, and his features were almost delicately beautiful; his hair was dark, and his eyes were grey.

"What apology must I make for intruding upon you in this unceremonious manner?" he said, in a voice as pleasing as his air was frank. "Mr. Serle has been so kind as to say he will give me a bed to-night."

"I am most happy to see your lordship. I hope you will be able to make yourself at home," was Mrs. Serle's reply, as she escaped from the room.

Mr. Serle, apologizing, also left it, and the viscount remained alone. The door opened, and a most beautiful

girl appeared, quite as distinguished-looking as himself, her pink dress of rich and flowing material, and her necklace and bracelets of pearl.

Up rose Lord Temple, the finished gentleman. The young lady hesitated.

"Allow me to give you a chair," he said. "I have the honour of speaking to Miss Serle?"

"No," she replied: "I am Miss Danesbury."

Charlotte Serle came in, and was soon followed by Louisa. The viscount scanned the dresses of the three, and suspected company. The next to appear was Mr. Serle, in orthodox dinner costume. Lord Temple drew Mr. Serle outside the door.

"Have you visitors to-day?"

"Only a few, my lord."

"Then what am I to do? I am in morning-dress. You said I should be quite *en famille*."

"Your lordship's dress is all-sufficient. We do not stand upon ceremony in our house, or our visitors either.

"Well, if Mrs. Serle will excuse it. I must wash my hands, and be obliged to you for combs and brushes, and such things. There is no time to send to my house."

"I will show your lordship to your room. It is ready."

"Who is that gentleman?" inquired Isabel Danesbury.

"Don't know him from Adam," was the response of Charlotte Serle.

As she was speaking, Mr. St. George entered. A little man with a thin face, and keen, expressive dark eyes.

"Walter," said his bride-elect, "who is this client come unexpectedly to dine with us?"

"Viscount Temple."

When dinner was announced, Lord Temple, who ought, in right of his rank, to have taken Mrs. Serle, drew back in all the humility of his frock-coat, and offered his hand to Isabel.

So they sat together and conversed together, mutually pleased. Opposite to Isabel was her brother William, a remarkably handsome young man, though not quite so tall as Arthur.

"Tell me who all these people are," whispered Lord Temple to Isabel.

"I do not know the strangers," she replied. "Only the Serles, Mr. St. George, and my brother. That is my brother sitting opposite to me."

"A Mr. Serle, is he?"

"No," laughed Isabel, "I told you I was Miss Danesbury. He is William Danesbury."

"I really beg your pardon. You do not reside here?"

"I reside at Eastborough."

"Eastborough"—spoke Lord Temple half to himself—"Danesbury? Eastborough? why, you must be related to Arthur Danesbury!"

"He is my dear brother," answered Isabel.

"If we were not in a crowd, I should take both your hands and cordially shake them," exclaimed Lord Temple, "for Arthur's sake. We were together at Cambridge. You must have heard him speak of me."

"You never can be Reginald Dacre?" uttered Isabel.

"Reginald Dacre is no other than my unworthy self. Very unworthy indeed, Miss Danesbury, if you knew all Arthur could tell you. He was a true friend to me, and saved me from many a pitfall. Now that I have heard of Arthur, I shall not rest till I pay him a visit. You will find me intruding some day upon you, Miss Danesbury."

"Danesbury House will be very pleased to welcome you. And if you respect and like Arthur, I am sure you will respect and like Papa."

"You do not drink your wine," observed Lord Temple.

"Thank you: I do not like wine."

"Not like wine!"

"I never drink it by choice. At a dinner-table such as this, I sip it not to appear singular."

"But why?" inquired Lord Temple.

"The very last words Mamma ever said to Arthur were an injunction not to drink anything but water."

"When she was dying?"

"Oh, no. She was quite well; as well as we are now, and had been dining at this very table, for we were here on a visit. But Mamma received a hasty summons home, and she took leave of me and Arthur, and left us here, and started. Before she reached Eastborough, it had happened. The chaise was overturned, and Mamma killed."

"How shocking! how distressing!" uttered Lord Temple, his countenance betraying its sad interest.

"We were only children," continued Isabel. "Mamma feared that in her absence Mr. and Mrs. Serle might be giving us wine and porter, and she whispered to Arthur, in the moment of her departure, not to touch either; and he promised."

"But your brother there does not confine himself to water," he added, for he saw that William Danesbury drank as much wine as the rest of the table.

"No," replied Isabel. "Papa's second wife has had the bringing-up of William, and she does not approve of the water-drinking system. She is Mrs. Serle's sister."

And thus they continued to converse upon one topic or another until the ladies rose. It was Lord Temple who, forgetful of his frock-coat, held the door open for them as they filed out of the room.

Lord Temple did not leave Mr. Serle's at the end of a day or two. His affairs were in a more intricate state than Mr. Serle had supposed, and not until the eighth

day was he at liberty to depart. He had not failed to improve his acquaintance with Isabel Danesbury. Indeed, it was no longer acquaintance, or friendship either; it had grown into love. Ay, love on both sides, short as the period had been.

The first use Lord Temple made of his liberty was to hasten down to Eastborough, and lay his proposals for Isabel before Mr. Danesbury.

Arthur Danesbury was surprised at the sight of his former friend, and at his proposing for Isabel after so short a knowledge of her. Mr. Danesbury inquired privately of Arthur what character he bore at college, and what his principles were.

"He was no worse than many another at college," was Arthur's reply; "better than some. His chief fault lay in being so easily led away."

"Is he one to whom we ought to give Isabel?"

"He has many good points: he is frank and truthful, and full of honour."

"I shall write and inquire of Serle what he knows of his private character," said Mr. Danesbury. "Lord Temple frankly states that his affairs are such that he cannot marry yet, for his father's death left all in confusion, and it will take time to get them even tolerably straight."

"He informs me that he has made himself answerable for some of his father's liabilities," observed Arthur. "He used to be generous to a fault. Suppose, sir, you accept him conditionally?"

"Yes, I think that must be it. I will tell him that if we hear nothing to his disadvantage I will say yes, after a while."

Viscount Temple was soon back in London, whither Arthur accompanied him. He—her lover—informed Isabel that her father had no objection to him, and they

plighted their troth. Mr. Serle had written word, in answer to Mr. Danesbury's application, that he knew nothing unfavourable of Lord Temple. The true fact was, that he knew nothing whatever of his private habits, except that he got out of money. And Isabel Danesbury returned home, after Charlotte Serle's marriage, an engaged girl.

CHAPTER VII

LORD TEMPLE'S FOLLY

Lord Temple paid occasional visits to Danesbury House. Their marriage was not spoken of, even yet, as a speedy event, although they were both some years older than when first engaged, but his affairs did not get straight. Serle & St. George performed prodigies towards righting them, so the former assured Lord Temple; but the more they effected, the more his lordship spent.

Robert and Lionel Danesbury had been for some time resident in London. Robert's regiment, a foot regiment, was quartered there; and Lionel, who had done with Mr. Pratt, was with an eminent town practitioner, attending lectures, and walking the hospitals. William likewise remained in town. At the expiration of his articles, the firm had proposed to Mr. Danesbury that he should continue with them a few additional years, for he was clever in his profession, and of much use to them. The three young men were not very frequently together, for their pursuits lay in different spheres, and each had a separate lodging. Mr. Danesbury was startled at the frequent calls upon his purse. All were ready with an excuse; Robert's, perhaps, the most plausible. He urged the expensive mess; the extravagant habits of his brother-officers. Mr. Danesbury made a handsome allowance to

Robert, besides his pay; but the allowance and the pay seemed to be swallowed up, no one could tell how, and a vast deal besides. He was now a lieutenant. William received a good salary from his employers, but he could not make it sufficient. Lionel was furnished with a liberal allowance, but it seemed as nothing to him. Mr. Danesbury consulted with Arthur, and grumbled, and wrote lectures to his sons; but Mrs. Danesbury made very light of it.

But what was it that their London life was teaching them? Everything that was bad. Robert and Lionel (do not forget that we are not much alluding to William, who was not quite so unsteady as his brothers) were not yet in the habit of *getting intoxicated*—that only happened to them occasionally. Lionel chiefly indulged in porter, medical-student fashion; Robert in wine; and spirits came amiss to neither. Drinking begets drinking.

A cab was dashing down Oxford Street into Holborn, a well-appointed cab, with a coronet on its panels. The driver was about to turn up Red Lion Street, when he checked his horse so suddenly that the animal was nearly pulled on his haunches.

"Halloa! Payn!" called out he; and Sir Robert Payn, who had been walking along in a brown study, turned off the pavement, and went round to the driver's side of the cab.

"I say, Payn," cried he, "were you not in St. James's Street the night before last when I went in?"

"Yes," answered the baronet. "You had been in the sun, and no mistake."

"Did I play while you were there?"

"Not you. You were too far gone. You couldn't have held the cards."

"What time did you leave?"

"What time did I leave?" pondered Sir Robert. "It

must have been getting on for three when I left St. James's Street. Danesbury and Colonel Neeve went out when I did. You were fast asleep on the sofa then."

"Was Sandlin there?"

"No, Sandlin was gone. Whitehouse was there, and Georgy Eden; and those were about all, I think, except you and Anketel. Are you coming to Sandlin's to-night?"

"I don't know. I shall see. Good day."

The cab sped on, up Red Lion Street, towards Bedford Row; and there it pulled up at the offices of Serle & St. George. The gentleman threw the reins to his groom, jumped out, went into the house, and opened the door of the front office.

"Mr. Serle in?"

"No, my lord. Mr. St. George is."

His lordship walked listlessly through the room. The head clerk left his place and held open the door of the private room of Mr. St. George.

"Lord Temple, sir."

Mr. St. George rose. "Serle's not in?" said Lord Temple, who was not only some years older than when we last saw him, but who looked it.

"No," replied Mr. St. George. "He is gone up west with Mr. Danesbury."

"With Mr. Danesbury! Is he in town?"

"He came up last night on unexpected business. Is it anything I can do, my lord?"

"I can speak to you, as well as to Serle; it is all the same, I dare say," said Lord Temple, throwing himself into the client's chair. "I want some money raised. I must have £3000 by the 25th."

Mr. St. George looked grave, and at length spoke hesitatingly.

"Lord Temple——"

"Well?"

"Will you pardon me if I am frank with you? Mr. Serle, I know, smooths matters over, and gives them a pleasant aspect. It is his way. So long as the evil day can be put off, he is sure to do it. I should like to be more honest with you. I should like to ask how much longer you are going to play with Miss Danesbury," said the lawyer, in a low tone, "if I may dare to ask it?"

The colour rushed into the viscount's face. He bit his lip.

"You will forgive my boldness, Lord Temple, when you remember that her mother was my near relative. I have long been pained to see your time, your fortune, your energies thrown away; pained for you, and pained for Miss Danesbury. You ought to give her up."

"Give her up!" echoed his lordship: "*give her up!* Never. She is dearer to me than my own life. How dare you suggest so dishonourable an alternative?"

"My lord! Dishonourable! Whether would it be more honourable frankly to tell Mr. Danesbury that your circumstances bar you from marrying, or to waste Miss Danesbury's best years in a useless engagement which will never be fulfilled?"

His lordship turned his haughty face on Mr. St. George. It expressed the very essence of scorn.

"What are you saying, sir? That the engagement will never be fulfilled?"

"My lord, I am saying nothing that the facts of the case will not justify. How can the engagement ever be fulfilled when you are daily putting it more and more out of your power to do so? When you were first engaged to Miss Danesbury, years ago, you were in a better position to marry than you are now."

"I cannot control my circumstances, and convert shillings into pounds," cried Lord Temple, after an uncomfortable pause.

"But you can control yourself and spend less," spoke Mr. St. George. "That, at least, is in your power. Lieutenant Danesbury was at my house the other night, and he said Lord Temple was 'going the pace', even for a nobleman."

"*He* need not talk," returned Lord Temple, in a fiery tone. "There are not many men in this town, noble or simple, who go the pace quicker than Robert Danesbury."

"I believe that is unfortunately true. But Robert Danesbury is not an engaged man."

"You harp so much upon my being engaged," peevishly cried Lord Temple. "I wish I was not engaged. I wish I was married."

The lawyer added: "I should marry."

"Marry!" echoed Lord Temple in consternation.

"I should. I should lay a statement of facts before Mr. Danesbury, and say, 'Give me your daughter, sir, and save me from my follies, for I cannot save myself.'"

"If I could marry!" murmured his lordship. "But—to bring Isabel to an unsuitable home, a home unworthy of her! And you know things have come to such a pitch that the estates must be at nurse."

"I know they must. But a thousand or fifteen hundred a year can be managed out of them."

Lord Temple opened his eyes and his mouth. He doubted if he heard aright. "Marry upon that!" he uttered; "why, it would take as much nearly for Isabel's court dress when she was presented!"

Mr. St. George, though considerably amused, felt angry. "We are speaking at cross-purposes, Lord Temple," he said, taking out his watch, the lawyer's hint that a conference is up. "When I spoke of your marrying at once, I thought of your living retired for a time, as a private gentleman. I believe I said so. You, it appears, can only

contemplate it in accordance with your rank as a peer. I confess that I see no probability of your being enabled to marry as such either now or later."

Lord Temple played with his watch-chain. "My concern is for her, not for myself. If I were put in a first-floor lodging, or a cottage with two rooms, it would be as good to me as a palace, if she were but with me."

"Then why need you fear for Isabel? She has not been brought up to the luxuries of high life, and would not miss what she has scarcely been accustomed to."

"But she would be Lady Temple then."

"And could wait for her honours. However, do as you think best, my lord."

A clerk put in his head: "Captain Thomson's here, sir. He wanted to see Mr. Serle, but he'll see you instead. It's very important, he says."

"Ask him to wait a minute."

"I am going," said Lord Temple. "I have made up my mind to speak to Mr. Danesbury. But about that £3000, St. George. You will not forget to tell Serle?"

"I will tell him. £3000—it is a large sum. Was it play?"

Lord Temple nodded.

"I thought you had left off play?"

"I had left it off, and did not know anything about losing this. I should not have done it, had I been in my senses."

"I do not understand you," said Mr. St. George.

"It was that cursed drink," returned his lordship.

"Still, I do not understand."

"Why, it was in St. James's Street," explained Lord Temple. "I went in with Anketel, the night before last, three parts gone, and I threw myself on a sofa, and to sleep I went. I declare that is all I remember of it. Next morning when Anketel called upon me, I was thunder-

struck; told him it was a hoax; but he said I should find it no hoax when I came to pay. And I found I had lost £3000, and had given my I O U for it."

"Are you sure you gave it? Are you sure they were not hoaxing you after all?" asked Mr. St. George.

"I am sure I gave it. For I would not believe Anketel; and Swallowtail, who holds it, brought it to show me. It was my own writing, plain enough; rather shaky, but still mine."

"Swallowtail—Swallowtail?" said Mr. St. George.

"I don't like him myself; he is as keen as a razor. He is a lawyer, isn't he?"

"He was," replied Mr. St. George, emphasizing the second word; "his practice grew too sharp, and he was struck off the rolls."

"Oh, that's it, is it?" carelessly replied Lord Temple.

"I don't like Anketel," observed Mr. St. George.

"Oh, he is a good fellow enough, in the main: always at one's beck and call. Well, I don't get into such another pit. Tell Serle the money must be ready by the 25th, for that is the day I have promised it. Good morning, St. George."

Lord Temple climbed into his cab, took the reins from his groom; touched his horse; and was whirled away towards Hyde Park Gardens, where Mr. St. George's residence was situated.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DEMAND

Not long had Lord Temple left Bedford Row when Mr. Danesbury and Mr. Serle returned to it. Mr. Danesbury was beginning to look quite an old man. The courses

pursued by his sons told upon his health and spirits.

"Lord Temple has just driven from here," observed Mr. St. George. "I expect he is gone to my house to see Isabel, by the pace at which his cab tore from the door. I fancy he will be making you a proposal to-day, sir."

"Of what nature?" inquired Mr. Danesbury.

"That he may be allowed to take Isabel at once, for better or for worse. He has been waiting all these years for his affairs to be set straight, with a miracle, I suppose, but they only get deeper involved."

"How is that?" said Mr. Danesbury.

"It is his own fault, sir. He associates with other men of his rank and plunges into all their folly and improvidence. Once let him be removed from the wild lot who beset him now, give his naturally good qualities fair-play, and he might become an ornament to his order. Isabel's daily influence would do much."

Mr. Danesbury sighed deeply. "It appears to me that young men nowadays think of little besides pleasure and reprehensible pursuits. It was not so when I was young."

"These boys of yours have been less fortunately situated than you were, sir. You were sheltered in your paternal home, and did not leave it: they have been cast abroad in this city of evil, without the protection of one. Rely upon it, if we would keep a young man steady, we must give him a home that he can find pleasure in. We must compass him about and shield him, as it were, with home influence. The want of this has been Lord Temple's bane: he said so this very day."

"There is a great deal in it," observed Mr. Danesbury.

"Are you going out again, sir?"

"To see William. I have not seen him yet."

"He returns home in autumn, I hear, for good."

"Yes," replied Mr. Danesbury, "he joins us in the works."

"You will ask them all three to come and dine with us to-day, sir. Mrs. St. George is expecting them."

"Thank you. I will tell William; but the question is, where am I to pick up Robert and Lionel."

Mr. Danesbury was leaving the room when Mr. Serle came in, having got rid of Captain Thomson.

"Danesbury, my wife says you must all dine with us to-day."

"We are engaged to Mrs. St. George."

"That's not fair," returned Mr. Serle; "Charlotte had you last time. You must promise us for to-morrow."

"I hope to get this business arranged to-morrow in time to go back to Eastborough."

Mr. Danesbury went out. Mr. Serle stood with his back to the fireplace for a moment before returning to his own room, whilst his junior partner sat down to his writing-table.

"What a scamp that Robert Danesbury is getting!" uttered Mr. Serle.

Mr. St. George looked up.

"He has been signing bills wholesale. Must have done it when he was drunk, I say. He will be got out of this mess; but Danesbury will have future trouble with him, as sure as my name's Mat Serle. Has Cargill been here?" he asked suddenly.

"No; but Lord Temple has."

"What did he want?"

"The old errand. Money raised."

"I should like to know what upon," crabbedly retorted Mr. Serle. "He has pretty nearly drained himself dry."

"He wants £3000 by the 25th of the month."

"How much?" was Mr. Serle's astonished rejoinder.

"£3000."

"Why, what has he been at to want that?" he resumed, after a pause.

"Play," was the short answer.

"To go and lose £3000 at play! He is mad."

"He says he was perfectly senseless. Knew nothing about it then, and remembers nothing now."

Mr. Serle nodded his head.

Later, as Mr. Danesbury was standing by Charing Cross, Lord Temple and his cab came driving by. The young nobleman saw him, and pulled up.

"Whither are you bound?" he inquired, when salutations were over.

"To Bedford Row," replied Mr. Danesbury.

"Allow me to drive you," said Lord Temple. "Get up behind," he added to his servant. So the man got out of the cab, and Mr. Danesbury got in.

"I am delighted to have met you," exclaimed Lord Temple, slackening the reins. "I have a petition to prefer to you, though I fear you will not entertain it."

"What is it?" said Mr. Danesbury.

"I am ashamed to ask it," returned Lord Temple with a heightened colour. "I had better bring it out without any softening," he added, in a sort of desperation. "The fact is, sir, I want you to give me Isabel at once and I have nothing to keep her on."

"What do you call nothing?" asked Mr. Danesbury.

"A thousand or fifteen hundred a year, or so. Do you think Isabel would risk it?"

"Not if her heart be set upon opera-boxes and court diamonds."

The young nobleman looked round at Mr. Danesbury in surprise. "St. George has been talking to you, sir?"

"Yes, he has," replied Mr. Danesbury. "I went into Serle's just after you left, and St. George told me what he had been recommending."

Lord Temple scarcely breathed. "Do you approve of it?" he asked at length.

"I think it would be a far happier life, both for you and Isabel, than the one you are leading; and I should entirely approve of it, but for one thing."

"What is that, sir?"

"St. George spoke of your extravagant evening habits. Are you sure, sure beyond doubt, that you can put these entirely and for ever aside? Unless you are, I will not consent to give you my daughter."

"So long as I am alone," Lord Temple said, "I must keep up, in some measure, my evening habits; but from the moment that I am a married man, I forswear them. On my honour, as a British nobleman, by my sacred word, sir, I tell you the truth."

"Then, Lord Temple, you shall have Isabel."

They reached Bedford Row. Mr. Danesbury went in and Mr. St. George came out. "Has anything been done?" he whispered. "Have you said anything to Mr. Danesbury?"

"I have said all," was Lord Temple's answer, whilst a radiant expression sat upon his countenance; "and he thinks as you do, that it will be the best thing. I shall be ever grateful to you, St. George, for suggesting it to me."

Mrs. St. George sat on a low chair, nursing a young gentleman in long, white petticoats; another in short full velvet ones, the very shape of a fan, was making himself troublesome in all parts of the room; and a little girl in a pink embroidered frock had seated herself on the carpet. Mrs. Danesbury was at one of the windows.

"You look tired, Aunt Eliza," cried Mrs. St. George.

"I am vexed," returned Mrs. Danesbury. "I thought Robert and Lionel would have been here to see me before this."

"How do you know they may not have called while we were out, Mamma?" interposed Isabel.

"Servants forget sometimes," observed Mrs. St. George. "Walter, darling, come and ring the bell."

"Shan't," was lisped from the far end of the room.

Isabel laughed, rose, and rang it. And the servant, in answer to inquiries, said that none of the Mr. Danesburys had called.

"Are you sure?" cried Mrs. Danesbury, turning sharply on the man.

"Quite sure, ma'am. No one has been but one gentleman, and he called twice. He asked for Miss Danesbury, and his cab had a coronet on it."

Mr. St. George entered.

"Has Mr. Danesbury got back yet?" he asked.

"No, he hasn't," returned Mrs. Danesbury. "Have you seen Robert?"

"I have not. I believe he has. Isabel, step into this room with me. Charlotte, call the children. I want to talk secrets with Isabel."

The back drawing-room was empty, and he closed the door between the two rooms. "Isabel," he began, "have you seen Lord Temple?"

"No."

"Then what will you give me for some news?"

She made no reply.

"Now do not look so scared and conscious, or I will not tell!—I believe he means to ask you to take him as he is."

Isabel did look very conscious, if not scared; but at that moment there was a thundering peal at the house door.

Mr. St. George went out of the room by the door leading to the staircase, leaving Isabel in agitation. In another moment two white, aristocratic hands were laid

on her shoulders, and she looked up. A faint cry of surprise, and Lord Temple clasped her to him.

"My dearest, this suspense is to end, for I am to have you, poor as I stand. Your father has consented. Will you consent?"

At this moment the door opened, and Mrs. St. George entered. Viscount Temple raised his face, placed Isabel's arm within his and stood there with her—proud, calm, self-possessed. Mr. St. George came following his wife quickly.

"Now, Charlottel what can you possibly want?"

"I—I thought it was only you," stammered Mrs. St. George. "I did not know Lord Temple was here."

"Did I not tell you I had secrets to discuss with Isabel?" remonstrated Mr. St. George, with mock seriousness, while his wife looked from one to the other, and Lord Temple laughed to see her bewilderment.

"You are both laughing," she returned. "You are also laughing, Isabel. You must all have some secret."

"Which you shall know very shortly, dear Mrs. St. George, and the world also," answered Lord Temple.

Mr. Danesbury and William arrived, and they sat down to dinner. When the cloth was removed, the troublesome Master Walter and his sister were brought in. Mrs. Danesbury took the boy on her knee, and after supplying him with fruit and other good things from the dessert, held her glass of port wine to his lips, that he might sip it. Mr. St. George immediately placed his hand over the glass. "No wine for the child, Mrs. Danesbury. My children do not drink it."

Isabel, who was on the other side of Mrs. St. George, took occasion to whisper: "Have you adopted Arthur's theory?"

"I have adopted your mamma's," replied Mr. St. George.

"You are drinking wine yourself," said Isabel.

"Yes: I was not brought up to drink water," significantly responded Mr. St. George. "But I do not exceed, Isabel."

There was an interruption. Lionel Danesbury entered. A good-looking, pleasant young man, something like William. Lionel was not tall, scarcely reaching middle height. He was in high spirits, and seemed very well.

"A pretty dance I have had after you, Lionel," cried Mr. Danesbury. "Four times I was at your rooms to-day, and could not find you in."

"I was at the hospital, sir. Thank you, Mrs. St. George, I have dined. I did not get the note my father left till six o'clock, so I went and had a chop first, for I knew you would have finished."

Lionel sat down by his mother, and Mr. St. George passed him the wine.

"When will you pass, Lionel?"

"In the spring. Pass the Royal College of Surgeons—not the Physicians, you know, yet."

"Of course not. And where do you think of setting up?"

"In London, of course. I intend to be a great man before I die, Mother; and I hope you'll live to see it. 'Sir Lionel Danesbury, Baronet, M.D., Physician to Her Majesty the Queen.' Nothing less than the top of the tree will content me."

"Well, Lionel, I see no reason why you should not rise to the top," returned Mrs. Danesbury. "You have every advantage: ten times more than most young medical men have. If you will but be steady."

"Oh, I shall be steady enough," laughed Lionel.

Later in the evening, and when they had given up hopes of seeing Robert, they heard an arrival. Mrs. Danesbury's face lighted up.

"There's Robert!" she exclaimed. "It is sure to be he."

He was the least good-looking of the four sons, for he inherited Mrs. Danesbury's cross look and her cold eyes, but he was nearly as tall as William, and made a fine, upright soldier. Mrs. Danesbury's heart warmed to him.

"But, Robert," she whispered, "what is this that we hear of you? That you are acquiring dreadful habits, and get out of money as if it were dross."

"Tush, Mother! If you believe that, you'll believe anything," returned the lieutenant. "What dreadful habits, pray?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Mrs. Danesbury. "But your father worries himself to fiddlestrings over it, and Arthur looks as glum as he can look. You and Lionel are ruining them, they say."

"Of course they must grumble: such staid old codgers always do. Don't let them frighten you, Mother. I am all right; but gentlemen must live as gentlemen."

CHAPTER IX

THE WEDDING

Isabel found the Misses Heber out, and her aunt alone. "I will take off my shawl, Aunt," she said; "I am come to stay the day with you. Things were cross at home."

"Meaning Mrs. Danesbury, Isabel?"

Isabel nodded.

"Has Lord Temple left, Isabel?"

"He left after breakfast this morning. He comes down again for a day or two next week, and then not

again until——” She burst into a sudden flood of tears. Mrs. Philip could scarcely speak for concern.

“Child, what is this? Is anything amiss between you and Lord Temple?”

“No, no, Aunt. I believe it is the contrast my own individual happiness presents to other troubles looming in the distance that makes me so sad. Aunt, it is about the boys. I fear they are going all wrong; I fear both William and Lionel have taken to drink deeply. Mamma *will not* make home sociable for them, ask her as we will. But she cannot; will not: she makes home a dull, miserable place. We never hear anything more cheerful in the house than complaints of her headaches, and orders that we should be still.”

A few mornings before this conversation, Lionel had gone to her, and leaning over her chair in his good-tempered way, said he wanted to ask her a favour.

“Well, what is it?” she returned.

“I want you to have the Boyds and the Ropers this evening.”

“How can you be so unreasonable?” retorted Mrs. Danesbury. “The house is enough upset with the fuss kept up for Lord Temple, without the trouble of bringing other people into it.”

“It can all go into the same fuss,” jokingly returned Lionel.

“I tell you, Lionel, I can’t have them, and I won’t be teased,” was the reply of Mrs. Danesbury. “Rubbish about a monastery! the least noise or excitement gives me the headache. I can’t have visitors, and that’s enough.”

Lionel flew into a passion, and swore aloud as he banged the door to after him. “If a fellow tries to keep on the square she won’t let him,” muttered he, as he strode across the hall.

Significant words!

Scarcely had Lionel left the room when, strange to say, William entered it with a somewhat similar petition.

Mrs. Danesbury felt provoked, she believed that William and Lionel must be in league together, and she gave him a most harsh and unqualified refusal, demanding, with a sneer, if they thought to take Danesbury House by storm. Isabel had been privy to this, and she now related it to Mrs. Philip. "That night," she concluded, sinking her voice, and pressing her handkerchief to her eyes, "that night they came home the—the—worse for what they had taken!"

"Mrs. Danesbury is out of her mind," said Mrs. Philip.

"When she gives way to these fits of temper she is almost like it. This unhappy conduct of the boys—especially of Lionel—augments her irritation, and renders it unbearable."

"Isabel, you may depend upon it that she is blaming herself in her heart of hearts. She was foolishly indulgent to Robert and Lionel, and when they were grown into young men supplied them with a ruinous quantity of pocket-money; yet was always thwarting them in trifles."

"William went off to the works before Mamma's storm was over; and Lionel departed towards Brookhurst with his gun, and said he should not be home for a day or two. Of course, all this is hard for Papa to bear. Do you not think him very much altered, Aunt?"

"Yes," shortly replied Mrs. Philip. "But talking of this unhappiness will not mend it. Is your wedding-day fixed?"

"Yes," answered Isabel, with a rosy blush; "it is to be on the eighteenth."

"Why, that will be in a fortnight! Not any too soon, Isabel. I hope, my child, you will enter upon a happier home than you have had with Mrs. Danesbury. The more I see of Lord Temple the more I like him."

"Louisa Serle is coming down to the wedding."

"Indeed! As a bridesmaid, I suppose. Who proposed that?"

"I did. Mamma has been so—so——"

"So very cross-grained altogether, and so indignant that Mary and Anna Heber should be two of your bridesmaids, that you proposed her niece Louisa as a sop."

"But—talking of marriage—has it ever struck you, Aunt, that Arthur has any particular attachment?"

Mrs. Philip Danesbury looked at her niece—a peculiar look. "Has it occurred to you to think so, Isabel?"

"Not quite to think so, perhaps, but to doubt whether it is so or not. I allude to Mary Heber. Mary would make him a good wife."

"She would. Such a wife as your mother made Mr. Danesbury. Save in fortune, she is a fit wife for the first lord in the land. She is worthy of Arthur Danesbury: I cannot give her higher praise."

"Here come Mary and Anna: what glowing colours their walk has given them!"

They hastened in when they saw Isabel; lady-like, sweet-looking girls, with well-formed figures and elastic steps.

"I hope you have come to spend the day," called out Mary, as she took Isabel's hand.

"The whole day, till nine or ten at night," said Isabel.

William Danesbury came in to tea, and they went from talking to mirth. At half-past nine they thought it must be half-past eight, so gaily had the time passed. Soon after Isabel put her things on.

"Now, William, mind your evenings are spent here as often as you like," said Mrs. Philip. "Isabel will be gone, and Danesbury Hall may be dull. And bring Lionel with you, so long as he is at home."

"All right, Aunt, I'll come. But I can't answer for Lionel."

They said good night, and walked fast over the road.

"Dearest William," Isabel whispered, "let me say a word of advice. If you were really to take to—to—that dreadful habit, I think I should almost die of grief and shame. I am sure Papa would. Will you try and overcome it for my sake?"

A moment's hesitation, and then a clear steady answer: "I will try."

When the hall door was thrown open for them, William took out his watch and looked at it by the light of the hall lamp. It was a quarter-past ten. He was then turning from the door, but Isabel turned with him.

"You are not going out again to-night?"

"Just for half an hour."

"Oh pray, pray do not!" she urged. "Come in and play a game at chess with me."

"A pretty time to come home!" was Mrs. Danesbury's greeting. "What made you so late?"

"It is not late, Mamma," murmured Isabel. She then pulled forward the chess-table, and began setting out the men.

"You are not going to begin chess at this hour?"

"There is plenty of time for a game," exclaimed Isabel. "It is only a quarter-past ten."

"There's not time, and I want to go to bed," retorted Mrs. Danesbury. "I was up half of last night; if you want to know the reason, ask William."

William turned on his heel and left the room. Isabel darted after him. He was striding along to the hall door. She grasped his arm.

"Oh, William, William! do not go! Do not heed her!"

"Not go! does she think to send me to bed at ten o'clock at night, like a baby?"

"For my sake," she implored, "for my sake. Stay in, and we will have our game at chess. Come back with me! Dearest William, I shall soon be gone. I ask you for my sake."

He scowled, hesitated, and finally turned back with her. She took his arm, and thus they went into the drawing-room. "Mamma," she said, approaching Mrs. Danesbury, "you will forgive me if I say I must play the promised game of chess with William."

Mrs. Danesbury was livid with anger. She rose up and confronted her husband.

"Are you going to sit tamely by and see me insulted, Mr. Danesbury?"

"You take things in a wrong light," said Mr. Danesbury; "in a calmer moment you will see it, I have no doubt."

Mrs. Danesbury flung out of the room, pushing one chair here and another there. Isabel made things comfortable, and sat down to chess with William. At about twenty minutes to eleven Mr. Danesbury rose, and said he should go to bed.

Presently William rang the bell. It was for hot water. He told the servant to put out the brandy.

"You will not take it, William," whispered Isabel, when the man was gone.

"I must have a glass, Isabel, and I shall. I cannot forgo everything at once."

"Arthur," she said, "beg him not."

"I wish he was like me," said Arthur—"did not like it." But that was all the remonstrance he ventured on.

The chessmen were put away soon after eleven, and all three drew round the fire for a cheerful chat, going up to bed about half-past. Isabel went inside her brother William's room. He kissed her fervently.

"Not many could have influenced me as you have to-night, Isabel. God bless you, my dear sister."

"May He bless you, William," she returned with streaming eyes, "and keep you from temptation!"

And every night, save two, by hook or by crook did Isabel contrive to appropriate the evenings of William and Lionel. Now at chess; now by the help of music.

And thus the wedding-day came on, and brought grand doings at Danesbury. All the sons were at home for it, many friends gathered at the house, and the whole of the workmen were feasted. It all passed off well, and the guests departed full of high spirits and good wishes, suspecting nothing amiss. Only to the household was it betrayed that Robert and Lionel had been carried up to bed helpless on this their sister's marriage-day.

CHAPTER X

A DISCOVERY—THE RESULTS

"Halloa! what's this?"

Mr. St. George's eye had fallen on a name written on the back of a note, "Victor d'Entraigue."

What caused his exclamation was a sudden conviction that that same note had passed through his hands before. He had a perfect recollection of the name, and also of the long sprawling writing—the two words taking up two lines across the back of the note—from one side to the other.

"Now, where did we pay away that note, that it could come into the hands of such persons as these Pratts must be?" thought he. "Why! it was one of those handed by Lord Temple to Swallowtail, to liquidate that gambling debt of £3000."

Mr. St. George had never been satisfied in his own mind upon the circumstances of that loss. The engagement of Lord Temple to Isabel, and their subsequent marriage, had given him an interest in that nobleman beyond what he felt for the generality of clients. Lord and Lady Temple had just returned from the Continent; and he had been to see them only two evenings before.

Mr. St. George touched his bell. "Send Hadden to me," said he, as a clerk answered it. "Hadden," cried Mr. St. George, "do you know anything of this Pratt, who and what he is?"

"I do not, sir. I never saw or heard of him till now; but the man whom Checkett sent in seemed to know him. He said he once was very respectable, but had got down in the world, and was now a marker—or whatever they call it—at a gaming-house in St. James's Street."

"Ah," said Mr. St. George, in a tone as if he had expected the information. "I want to have a word with this Pratt. Can you get him here?"

"I dare say I can, sir."

"Go and see."

Hadden was successful in his errand, and returned with Mr. Pratt: a thin, shabby-genteel man, with something of the gentleman about him still. Mr. St. George pointed to a chair, and then took out the bank-note.

"A seizure was put into your rooms this morning, Mr. Pratt," he began, "and you settled it by means of this note. I want a little information about it."

Pratt's face turned of a different white, more ghastly.

"Sir, if there's anything wrong about it, I never knew it. I am as innocent of it as I can be."

"How did you get it?"

"I got it paid me with another. The other was good, sir, I'll swear to it; for I changed it at the Bank of England."

"But I ask how you got them?"

"Well, sir, I got them from Swallowtail—Lawyer Swallowtail, as he is sometimes called. He had to pay me one hundred pounds, and he did pay me with these two notes."

"Did Swallowtail lose it to you at play, at the gambling-house in St. James's Street?"

The man was surprised and looked up. Mr. St. George's keen dark eyes were fixed on him.

"Not at play, sir. Mr. Swallowtail calls himself one of the nobs. He would not play with me."

"But at any rate it was the proceeds of a gambling transaction; if not between you and Mr. Swallowtail, between Mr. Swallowtail and somebody else," calmly repeated Mr. St. George.

Pratt was silent.

"And the 'pull' out of the affair—that is the orthodox word, I believe—was £3000."

Mr. Pratt could not answer, he could only stare.

"I want to know how the money was drawn from Lord Temple. When he went into the gaming-house that night with Anketel he was completely intoxicated, and lay on the sofa asleep. How was it he got playing?"

"Several were there when Lord Temple and Anketel came in, but they left. By three o'clock all had gone, except Anketel and Lord Temple."

"And Swallowtail," interrupted Mr. St. George.

"And Swallowtail: but we look upon him as one of the establishment. Besides these, there was not a soul in the room but me. Swallowtail and Anketel came up to Lord Temple, pulled him off the sofa, and set him up in an arm-chair at the green table. He could not hold the cards, but dropped them as fast as Anketel put them in his hands, and his head fell, unconscious. 'It's of no use,' said Swallowtail; 'he is too bad, he couldn't write.

I have got that I O U for £30 in my pocket, we can work the oracle with that.' 'Change the figures?' whispered Anketel. '*Add to the oughts,*' said Swallowtail, 'and go snacks.'"

"And so they altered Lord Temple's acknowledgment for £30 into £3000!" exclaimed Mr. St. George. "They are nice gaol-birds!"

"I did not know what they altered it into," returned Pratt; "all I heard was, that they would add to the oughts."

"Well—about your own share?"

"A week or two after that Swallowtail called me aside, and gave me the two fifty-pound notes, saying they were to help the boy. Of course, I knew what that meant."

"And you accepted them, knowing that they were hush-money, the proceeds of as nefarious a robbery as ever was perpetrated!" uttered Mr. St. George.

"And suppose I had refused the hundred pounds? it would have been doing Lord Temple no good; only adding to Swallowtail's booty. You need not reproach me, Mr. St. George: when the dark mood is upon me, I reproach myself keener than anybody else can do."

"What profession used you to follow? Any?"

"The medical," was the answer, after a slight pause of surprise. "I have not followed it much, for evil habits overtook me before I had well done walking the hospitals. I half-ruined my father, I completely tired out my other friends, and now I am attached to a gaming-house. I am ready to kill myself at times when I think of my wife and children. The little girl, thank Heaven, is at Eastborough. They have taken to her."

"Eastborough!" echoed Mr. St. George, in a startled tone, "you are surely not—not—you are no relation to Mr. Pratt, the surgeon there!"

"Only his son. I thought you knew me, Mr. St. George. Is it possible you did not?"

"I am sorry for you!" uttered Mr. St. George, with deep feeling. "I expect you want to place your son with an architect?"

"It will be of little use wanting. Even if his mother's friends would keep him in respectable clothes, which they have partly promised, I could never find the premium, and nobody will take him without, for I have no interest to get him in anywhere. Yet it's a pity," added the unhappy man, with a sigh: "when a lad shows extraordinary genius for art, which of course must have been specially granted him, it's a pity it cannot be fostered and brought to fruit. He is near fourteen."

"Has he been educated?"

"Oh, yes. Not regularly, but he has had snatches of it; one quarter at school and one away, and he's a clever boy, and has improved what he has had; he would not disgrace any office."

"I will think about it for you," said Mr. St. George. "A friend of mine is an architect, and I will inquire whether boys can get into an office without premium: perhaps he may be induced to take him, if his talent is so decided."

In the course of the afternoon, Mr. St. George went up to Lord Temple's. A great-aunt of Lord Temple's had died and left him her town house, a small one, at Kensington, and fourteen thousand pounds. He determined to make it his residence, and become a useful man.

When Mr. St. George had called in Brook Street two evenings before, Major Anketel was sitting there. Mr. St. George had not a good opinion of the Major, and was vexed to find Lord Temple again in contact with him. Isabel was well, and truly happy. She had found Lord Temple all she had thought him.

This afternoon Mr. St. George proceeded to Lord Temple's to put him on his guard against Major Anketel. Lady Temple was alone when he went in, and Mr. St. George thought he had never seen her look more lovely. Lord Temple soon entered. He was going down to Richmond with Lord Sandlin to dine. Mr. St. George requested a private interview, and Lord Temple took him into another room.

"My lord—that £3000 you lost at play to Swallowtail—which we had to raise for you—you remember? You never lost the money."

"Never lost it!" echoed Lord Temple. "What do you mean? I lost it, and paid it."

"You paid it, but you did not lose it. It has come to my knowledge, Lord Temple, though I cannot tell you in what way, for I am under a promise not to do so, that Major Anketel and that blackleg Swallowtail concocted a plan to swindle you out of it."

"They could not have swindled my writing out of me."

"I will explain. That transaction took place on the 11th of July. On the first of the month, some days before, you had also been the worse for wine, had played with Swallowtail, lost, and given him an I O U for the amount—£30. On the 11th, all who had gone into the gambling-house left, except Anketel and Swallowtail. Swallowtail thought of a bright scheme. He had this I O U for £30 in his pocket; you had written the debt in figures, not in words; and he proposed to Anketel to add oughts to the 30. And it was done. Nothing else was wanted, save the alteration in the date. A 1 was added to the other 1, and 11 stood out complete. That was the £3000 you paid."

"Can this be?" uttered Lord Temple.

"As to taking proceedings against them, I suppose it cannot be. In the first place, the evidence——"

"No, no," interrupted Lord Temple; "I will not rake up and make public a transaction so disgraceful to myself, even to punish them. I would not do it for my wife's sake."

"To bury it in silence will be the best plan in every way," said Mr. St. George. "There is no other alternative but the one of proceeding against them, and that is not convenient. Only keep clear of them for the future, Lord Temple."

"You need not tell me that, St. George," was the emphatic reply.

They returned to the presence of Lady Temple. Lord Sandlin was expected every moment, for he was to drive the viscount to Richmond, to this all-important dinner.

'As Lord Temple will be out, why should you not come with me to see Charlotte, and take a plain dinner with us?' said Mr. St. George to Lady Temple.

"I do not know why," answered she; "I should very much like to see her and the children. She called here to-day, but I was out."

"Do, Isabel," cried her husband; "it will remove all the compunction I have in leaving you."

So Lady Temple put her things on, and as she came back to the drawing-room from doing so, a servant entered, and said that Lord Sandlin waited. They all went downstairs together. An all-important dinner was this dinner at the "Star and Garter" at Richmond, its anticipation having kept the partakers of it in town longer than they would otherwise have remained. It was the settlement of a bet which Lord Sandlin had lost to Sir Robert Payn. It was a splendid feast, and they all ate and drank well save one, and that one was—not Lord Temple.

It was Sir Robert Payn. He was suffering from ill-

ness, and took scarcely anything. The rest drank deeply—deeply even for them.

Lord Temple had some very slight sense left in him, and told Earl Sandlin's groom to drive to his house. The earl whispered a contrary order, and the man of course obeyed his master. Lord Temple subsided into sleep; and when he woke he saw he was at the gaming-house in St. James's Street. Some half-dozen of the diners had agreed to resort thither. Lord Sandlin was one, and he had carried his friend with him.

"I must go home, Sandlin," hiccupped Lord Temple. "My wife is alone. I told you she'd be home early."

"She is not alone," returned the earl. "I sent to ask, and they said she was stopping for the night where she went to dinner."

"No!" uttered Lord Temple.

"Fact," stuttered the earl. "She stopped because she did not expect you back."

Of course this was an impromptu invention of the earl's but Lord Temple took it in. Down he sat on a sofa. Somebody mixed him a glass of brandy-and-water. He drank it mechanically, simply because it was put into his hands, and in five minutes was asleep again.

It was not very clear how long he remained there. Two or three hours. He was aroused by someone roughly awakening him. It was Major Anketel. Lord Temple rose into a standing posture, cast aside the major's help with unmistakable scorn, and steadied himself on the arm of the sofa.

"Off, sir!" shouted Lord Temple, livid with scorn and rage, in the midst of his brain's confusion; "how dare you touch me! Gentlemen," he stuttered, "this man, whom we have suffered so long to associate with us, is a cheat and a swindler, a man to herd with *roués* and felons."

What followed none of them could have told distinctly afterwards. Anketel gave Lord Temple the lie, and the room was as a Bedlam; shouts, oaths, questions. Some espoused Lord Temple's part, one or two Major Anketel's.

He must either make good his charges, or go out with Major Anketel.

No, he would not. He, Lord Temple, go out with a blackleg!

"Will you go out with *me*?" cried Colonel Groves. "I espouse Anketel's quarrel. I am no blackleg."

As he spoke, he struck Lord Temple on the cheek; his fist was hard, and the blood trickled down. The Colonel was a close and intimate friend of Anketel's.

A meeting was hastily arranged. Earl Sandlin proposed to second Lord Temple; and the Honourable George Eden, Colonel Groves.

It was carried out. With the grey break of early morning they started: Lord Sandlin driving his friend, and somebody else driving Colonel Groves. As they were starting off in the dog-cart, Lord Sandlin exclaimed that they must take a surgeon.

"I know a man who will do. He used to be attached to the — regiment."

A little farther the earl pulled up. A loud alarm was sounded on the night-bell, which brought forth a face in a nightcap at the second-floor window.

"There he is; I could swear to him by his grey whiskers. Halloa, Moore! put that window up."

Accordingly the window was put up, and the grey whiskers and the nightcap looked out.

"What's the matter, my lord?" was the demand, in a strong Irish accent.

"Dress yourself in a brace of shakes, and come down and see. A five-guinea job. Now don't be an hour."

The surgeon came out and took his seat.

When the party had discussed the place of meeting, Battersea Fields was decided on, Georgy Eden indicating a spot there "snug and safe". To Battersea Fields, therefore, Lord Sandlin drove, and found the others were there before him. They had brought another surgeon. No time was lost; the ground was chosen and measured, and while Lord Sandlin and Mr. Eden were conferring together, Viscount Temple went up to Sir Robert Payn and drew him aside.

"Payn, if I fall, will you undertake to break it to my wife? You will render me that service?"

"Yes. I hope it will not be necessary. This has no business to take place, Temple."

"Well—if I fall, you will soften the news in the telling to Lady Temple. Do not let her know the worst at once, Payn. It will break her heart, I fear, when she does know it."

"And if it turns out the other way, and you dispatch Groves, will you make yourself scarce for a time? Or you may both fall."

"Both cannot fall," said Lord Temple. "I shall fire in the air."

"What!"

"I shall. I have no quarrel with him; and if I am to be sent out of the world myself I will not go with murder on my hand."

The antagonists were immediately placed, and the pistols fired: Colonel Grove's as surely as if he had taken aim—Lord Temple's in the air. Lord Temple fell.

The ball had entered his chest. The blood was welling out, and he lay as one dead.

But Lord Temple was not gone, and the pulling him about by the surgeons awoke him to consciousness. They were both skilful men, and extracted the ball on the spot.

Lord Temple made a movement as if he would have raised his head, and his eyes sought Sir Robert Payn's. The latter read their anxious expression. He leaned over him.

"I understand," he said. "I'll be off at once. Keep your mind easy: by the time you arrive at home, she will be expecting you. This will be all right, I can see: only keep tranquil."

Sir Robert Payn drove leisurely to Lady Temple's. Lady Temple had not been in bed.

"A gentleman is below, my lady, and wishes particularly to see you. He bade me give you this card."

Sir Robert Payn's. On it was written in pencil: "I am deeply sorry to disturb Lady Temple at this hour, but have brought a message to her from Lord Temple."

She went up to him.

"What have you to tell me?" she murmured; "what is it that has happened?"

He hardly knew how to tell her; yet told she must be, for her wounded husband was even then on his road home. He got through the task pretty well, making light of it. A mere flesh wound, he said.

"To fight a duel! to go out to fight a duel!" she wailed, in a low tone. "How could he be guilty of it? How could he be so led away?"

"Can I do anything for you?" said Sir Robert. "Summon any of your friends?"

A sudden thought struck her: she looked up. "If my brother could be got here, it would be a comfort to me, and I know it would be to my husband. The telegraph would apprise him."

"Give me the address," said Sir Robert. "I will dispatch a message instantly."

The Danesbury family were at breakfast that same

morning, when the servant entered with a dispatch in his hand, and handed it to Arthur Danesbury.

“LONDON, 8 o'clock, A.M.

“Sir Robert Payn to Arthur Danesbury, Esquire.

“An accident has happened to Lord Temple. Lady Temple wishes for you here. Lose no time.”

“What in the world is it, Arthur?” called out William.

“You are a long while studying it.”

“Something is amiss with Lord Temple. They wish me to go up.”

“Does he telegraph?” asked Mr. Danesbury.

“He does not. Sir Robert Payn sends. There it is,” he added, handing the ominous words to his father, now that he had in a degree prepared him.

“What can it be?” uttered Mr. Danesbury, in concern.

“You will lose no time, of course, Arthur.”

When Arthur reached town, he made the very best speed to Lord Temple's that a London cab could make. Sir Robert Payn met him.

“What is it?” inquired Arthur, knowing then that he spoke to Sir Robert Payn; “what has happened to Lord Temple?”

“He has been wounded in a duel.”

“A duel!” Arthur could not help repeating, unable to realize the extraordinary tidings. “Could Lord Temple have been in his right senses?”

“Only partially so. He had taken too much wine. They all had, and there was a regular drunken brawl. Groves was cool and sober: he had not been of the drinking party.”

Arthur went in, and in a few minutes was standing over the bed. Lord Temple lay on it panting, his sad, repentant eyes gazing upwards.

"That I had been like you, Arthur!" he breathed; "that I had been like you, a water-drinker."

Lady Temple leaned over him, the tears falling. "Reginald, you know you must be silent."

"Had I not been full of wine this would never have occurred," he continued, unheeding the injunction. "Arthur, if I get well, I will forswear drink for ever."

The doctors could do nothing. Isabel had been reading to him out of St. John's Gospel, and he had listened with closed eyes and folded hands. When it grew dark, one of the attendants entered with a light, placed it on a table, and went out again.

"No—no," faintly cried Lord Temple.

His wife thought he meant to object to the light, as no doubt he did, and she took it herself from the room. In that moment he put out his hand: Arthur understood the movement, and bent over him.

"I—am—going, Arthur. I feel it. *Oh, my wasted life!* Thus to be cut off in its midst! Arthur, you will take care of her, and of her child. I leave them to you."

Isabel returned, and he moved lower, to give her her place by her husband. Lord Temple drew her face down that it might rest on his.

"Isabel—my darling!—it is nearly over."

Oh! that last embrace between two young loving hearts! Reader, may you never have cause to give or receive it! When the doctors next came in, a light was brought.

"Take her away, sir," one of them whispered to Arthur. "Her face is resting on the dead."

Isabel heard—raised her head—saw—comprehended. And with a wild cry, she let it fall again on the pillow beside him. "O Reginald! Reginald!"

All around Lord Temple's bed believed that he had gone; but whether the inward hemorrhage had stopped,

or that his constitution rallied, certain it is, a slight improvement began to be visible. And Lord Temple did not die.

CHAPTER XI

THE THREE YOUNGER SONS

The following year the misdoings of Robert, Lieutenant Danesbury, reached their climax.

William Danesbury had married Anna Heber. Mrs. Philip believed it might be the saving of William. Anna knew of the failing to which he was inclined, and she was willing to risk it. Mr. Danesbury acquiesced with pleasure.

Lionel had fondly anticipated the setting-up in London; but by the time he was a qualified surgeon, his intemperate habits had become so confirmed that Mr. Danesbury did not dare to sanction his doing so. He judged—and very rightly—that Eastborough would be better for him than London. Mr. Pratt was looking out for a partner, a man younger than himself, and Mr. Danesbury proposed Lionel. Lionel could not help being struck with the good sense of the proposition when he had allowed himself to digest it, and at length cheerfully acquiesced.

Robert came down to the marriage of his brother William, and took the opportunity to press for more money for his extravagances; but Mr. Danesbury refused to supply it. Robert returned to town; and there—and there—the infatuated man put false bills in circulation and obtained the proceeds, forging his father's signature.

The news came upon Mr. Danesbury like a thunder-bolt.

"Father," asked Arthur, when the first shock was over, "what is to be done? I had better go to London at once, and see what I can do."

"Yes. Act as circumstances shall require. Do the best you can. I give you full authority. When you have arranged about his commission, bring him home."

"He may not be willing to come."

"He must come. Use any means. Threats of consequences, if persuasions fail. I was always against his joining the army: I knew it would lead to a life of idleness, probably of vice. It has done both."

Arthur Danesbury proceeded to London. He drove to the head-quarters of Robert's regiment. Colonel Neeve stood at the entrance as Arthur was about to enter; they had a slight knowledge of each other, and shook hands. "I am in search of my brother," said Arthur. "Does he happen to be here?"

"Is it possible you do not know that your brother has quitted the regiment?" exclaimed Colonel Neeve, in a tone of astonishment.

"Quitted the regiment!"

"He has sold out, this two months past."

Arthur Danesbury was perfectly confounded. He was quite unprepared for the intelligence.

"Can you tell me where to look for him?"

"I am sorry that I cannot. He has never been here since."

Arthur wished Colonel Neeve good day, and left. He bent his steps to Bedford Row, and inquired of Mr. St. George if he knew anything of him.

"Not I," was Mr. St. George's answer. "Did you come to town to see him?"

"Yes, I——" Arthur hesitated. "Can you give me any help by which I may trace him out? You are so much better acquainted with the ways of London than I am."

Mr. St. George mused. "I wonder whether Pratt may not know something of him. He used to meet him sometimes in his night haunts."

"What Pratt?" inquired Arthur.

"That drunken son of Pratt's of Eastborough."

"He has been a great trouble to his father," remarked Arthur.

"He is attached to a fashionable gambling-house, and has some pay from it. By the by," cried Mr. St. George, with sudden emphasis, "did Roberts give you to-day a description of the fellow who presented these bills for payment—a thin man, with a white face and scarlet lips? That is uncommonly like Pratt himself. The probability is that he has been an innocent agent in the matter. Robert Danesbury may have made him his tool. Singularly enough, I sent for Pratt's son this morning, and am expecting him here. I told Pratt last year that I would get this lad, who is too good for such a father, into an architect's office, and I have just succeeded in doing so."

As Mr. St. George spoke, he rang his bell, and a clerk entered.

"Is young Pratt come?"

"Yes, sir. He is waiting."

"Send him in."

"A friend of mine is ready now to take you into his office, and try what stuff you are made of. Do you think you can be industrious and steady, and give satisfaction?"

"I hope so, sir. I'll do all I can. And I am very much obliged to you."

"Then you must repay the obligation by observing a certain rule which I wish to impose on you."

"What is it, sir?"

"That you never drink any sort of intoxicating liquor; neither wine, beer, nor spirits."

The boy's face became painfully suffused, for he knew why Mr. St. George thought it necessary to give him that caution. "Oh, sir," said he, "there will be no difficulty. I have promised the same to Mamma, and I will keep my word. She has never yet permitted me to drink anything but water, and I never will."

"I will trust you," answered Mr. St. George. "Remember, I implicitly trust you. I want you to step home and bring your father here. Tell him I wish to speak with him."

Young Pratt flew off, and soon returned with his father.

"Do you happen to know where Mr. Robert Danesbury is now?" Arthur inquired of Pratt.

"No, sir. I have not seen the captain for some time. I shall see two or three people to-night that I can inquire of."

"I shall be obliged to you to do so," returned Arthur Danesbury.

"And come here to-morrow morning and report," said the lawyer sharply—"at eleven o'clock."

The following day, Saturday, Pratt made his appearance in Bedford Row at the appointed hour. Arthur Danesbury was waiting for him. He had not been able to see Captain Danesbury, he said, for it was as he thought: the captain was in hiding; but he had heard that he sometimes appeared at a certain tavern called the "Golden Eagle." He "went there for his drink".

"I will go at once to this 'Golden Eagle'," replied Arthur.

"It will be of no manner of use, sir," interrupted Pratt. "He never appears there till night; and then with caution. Your surest plan would be to watch the doors after dark, or go inside and wait."

The "Golden Eagle" was situated in a low locality, near Oxford Street, and Arthur took up his station at

the corner, a most unenviable position; but from no other point could he see the two doors; and to watch only one was almost the same as watching neither. Arthur Danesbury was often jostled by the pestiferous crowd, who came too close to him with their poisonous breaths, their glassy eyes, and their tainted rags. Surely there might be a quiet corner where he could sit and wait: and he entered.

Several men, mostly young, and in shirt-sleeves, were serving behind the counter. It was the first time Arthur Danesbury had ever been inside a London gin-shop; and he stood in amazement. Lustrous mirrors in glittering gilt frames dazzled his sight, their costly plate glass reflecting back the lights as in countless numbers; massive pillars, all marble and burnished gold—at any rate to look at; showy time-pieces and rich cut-glass chandeliers. Could this be a common gin-shop. He approached a portly man who appeared to be the master.

Arthur courteously raised his hat.

“Will you allow me the privilege of waiting here for half an hour? I wish to see a friend who occasionally comes here, perhaps he may do so to-night.”

“Sir, with pleasure,” respectfully answered the landlord. “Will you please to walk into our private parlour, sir?”

“Thank you, no. This gentleman may be in and gone in a minute, and I might miss him. I will stand aside and wait here.”

The landlord bustled forward with a chair, and placed it at the corner of the counter. Arthur moved it back into the shade, somewhat out of the reach and somewhat out of the gaze of the crowd. The landlord handed him a weekly newspaper, and he opened it, but his attention was much taken up by what was passing around him.

They were coming in, thick and threefold. Men, women, boys, girls; some old, some young; some "respectable", some the very dregs of the street.

"We have rough customers here sometimes, sir," said the landlord, approaching Arthur, and speaking in a tone of apology; "and this is Saturday night: any other, it would not be so bad."

"Poor things!" returned Arthur Danesbury.

"Can I offer you a glass of anything, sir? I'm sure I should be proud to—if you'd please to name what. I have got as good a glass of port as ever was tasted."

Arthur shook his head. "You are very kind. I never drink."

"Never, sir! Not anything!"

"Except water."

Arthur's spirit was faint within him. In and out, in and out of the doors they poured—these poor, eager applicants, in all stages of misery, in all stages of disease, in all stages of intoxication. The doors were on the swing perpetually. Before one set had drained the poison that was destroying them, another was ready to fill up their places. What reward were they hastening on to in the next world? What were they hastening to only in this?

He sat till the house was ready to close, sat it out. Robert had not come in.

"May I trespass upon you again to-morrow night?" he inquired of the landlord.

"Come to-morrow night, sir, and as many nights as you please. I am sorry it is so dull for you sitting here, and watching others drink."

"I would rather watch them than drink myself," was Arthur Danesbury's answer. "What I have witnessed here to-night has not tended to increase my approval of it."

"Drink is not bad in itself, sir. There are other things that do them harm as well as drink. Look at the low trash they are always reading—the bad, pernicious literature that they buy up and devour, the women especially. It's awfully demoralizing, and destroys their minds faster than drink destroys their bodies. Good night to you, sir."

Sunday morning rose. Arthur Danesbury attended divine service at St. Paul's, and then bent his course westward to Lord Temple's house at Kensington. The service at St. Paul's was over early, and Lord and Lady Temple had not returned from church. But they soon followed him in, and greeted him with glad surprise.

"How is my little godson?" he inquired.

"You shall judge for yourself," answered Isabel.

"Never was such a child before—in his mother's eyes," cried Lord Temple.

"Now, Reginald! you know that he is lovely—and good."

"To be sure. Takes after his father in both respects," gravely responded Lord Temple.

They laughed at this. And Isabel quitted the room laughing.

"I am glad to see you looking so much stronger," observed Arthur, when left alone with his brother-in-law. "In the spring, when I was here at the child's christening, and you were, so to say, well—I had my doubts of you."

"Ay: my renewed life is a blessing I did not deserve."

"Have you persevered in your resolution of keeping to water?" inquired Arthur.

"Yes; thank God! And I will persevere by His help; persevere to the end."

"Water is the only certain safeguard in such a case as yours," remarked Arthur.

"It is," assented the viscount. "Yet I have not escaped

being tempted, even since my raising up—I shall never call it by any other name, Arthur.”

“Tempted by your friends?”

“No. By my medical men. When I was growing better, they ordered me stout and wine; insisted on my taking it; told me I should never be well if I did not. But I kept my resolution. I was *helped* to keep it,” added Lord Temple reverently.

“Medical men little know the ill they do in pressing stimulants upon patients who are recovering from illness,” cried Arthur Danesbury. “How do you manage to abstain from wine when dining with your friends?”

“Oh, I have put it hitherto on the score of my damaged inside, where the bullet went,” laughed Lord Temple. “The time may come when I shall avow fearlessly my true reason, that water is better for the body, and better for the soul.”

“I wish you would,” earnestly spoke Arthur. “You might effect much, if you gave yourself up, heart and spirit, to look into and strive to check this monster evil.”

“The Government might effect more than it does,” said Lord Temple. “It might render the laws and the duty affecting spirits more stringent; it might close up some of the gin and beer shops.”

“I was in one last night, Temple.”

“You!”

“I, myself. I wanted to see a person on urgent business, and was told I might catch him there. I waited there for hours. And the scenes I witnessed kept me awake all night. I never closed my eyes till daylight. Misery, misery, nothing but misery. If ever I enter Parliament, the prevalence of intemperance, and its possible remedy, shall be the first point to occupy my attention.”

“Do you think of entering it? I wish you would.”

"The thought has crossed my mind at times," replied Arthur. "I may, some day: and you will hear of me rising in my place and astonishing the house. Have you learned yet to like water?"

"A long while ago. If you put water and wine before me now, I would take the former from preference. And I will tell you another thing it is benefiting, and that's my pocket."

"Have you seen Robert lately?"

"No. Isabel was wondering what had become of him. That was a mad trick of his, the selling out."

"Yes, it was," said Arthur sadly. "We did not know of it at home. He is going all wrong, I fear."

"I fear so, too," said Lord Temple. "Drink again!"

At this moment Isabel came in, tossing an infant of nine or ten months old. There was no mistake about his being a beautiful child, with his mother's clear, intelligent eyes, and his father's refined mouth.

"May I ask, Arthur, why you do not marry?"

"I have had too much anxiety and care upon me to think seriously of it," he said in a low tone. "And I do not know that I could afford it."

"But you are a partner. You have a share to a certain extent," debated Isabel.

"But what I have accumulated I have been obliged to put back into the business: we could not have carried it on without; and for three years I have not drawn my full share. My visit to town is caused by—by an act of Robert's which will cost us £1000."

"How wrong! How wicked of him!"

"What does Mrs. Danesbury say to this?"

"She is bitter against William, but ever ready to find excuses for Robert and Lionel; though William indulges, and has indulged, far less than either of them. I think this last exploit of Robert's will startle her. I have orders

to carry him down with me. He must be got away from London, unless we wish to be quite ruined."

"Does Mamma make home more cheerful?"

"Quite the contrary. I frequently sit in my own room, or go to Mrs. Philip's: sometimes to William's."

"How hard it must be for Lionel! You say he grows worse. Does he mean to take his degree?"

"Isabel, if he can only cure himself of his unhappy propensity, he will do that, and everything else that he ought. His wishes to do right are sincere, and he is clever in his profession; but he lets drink stupefy him and waste his time and his energies."

"And what of William?"

"Well, I hardly know what to tell you. It is a cruel thing so to speak of two brothers, but I fear that Lionel is just now William's evil genius."

"Lionel! In what way?"

"He is everlastingly after William, enticing him out and leading him to drink."

"Why does not Papa forbid Lionel to go after William?"

"My dear, they are no longer boys; they are men. Lord Temple tells me that he still keeps to water: I think he is striving to do as he ought."

"Oh yes, and he will do it," she said, with quiet happiness. "He is going the right way to work. That dreadful duel, which I really thought would have killed me at the time, has turned out to have been a blessing."

"All things work together for good to them that love God," whispered Arthur, pressing his lips to her forehead. "Whatever sorrow may betide, remember that, my sister."

"No sorrow such as that was can ever befall me again with reference to my husband," she answered, the tears standing in her eyes. "I am quite certain that in conduct he will keep right now."

"How much longer am I to be nurse?" called out Lord Temple, from the opposite end of the room.

Isabel laughed. "Why do you not bring him here, Reginald? You have kept him yourself."

Isabel rose, and took the baby. She summoned the nurse, who carried away the child.

"I need not ask if you intend to make him a water-drinker," said Arthur.

"No, that you need not," heartily responded Lord Temple.

"Dinner, my lady," cried a servant, opening the door.

"We dine early on Sundays," remarked the viscount. "Isabel has got me into the habit—and we find it to be a good one: more particularly as regards the convenience of the servants. But—talking about getting into good habits—do you know that St. George has become a water-drinker?"

"Has he? St. George?"

"And his wife also," added Isabel.

Arthur looked up amused. "His wife! Charlotte used to say that she loved her wine, and could not live without her porter."

"She did love her porter," resumed Isabel, "but she says she loves her children better, and therefore makes the sacrifice: and a real sacrifice I can readily imagine it to be to Charlotte." Arthur took leave of Lord and Lady Temple at the church door, and proceeded towards the "Golden Eagle".

He reached the "Golden Eagle". One of the first objects his eye encountered on entering was his brother Robert, in a state of semi-stupidity. He was dressed in a common grey suit of clothes; not at all like a gentleman's clothes, and not at all like Sunday ones.

Arthur tucked his arm within his own, and led him out.

"Where are you lodging?" inquired Arthur.

"It's—it's—not far," hiccupped Robert. "I—can't take you there."

"Why not?"

"It's—it's a shabby place."

"Oh, never mind that. I have come on purpose to see it."

Robert led the way to a dirty house in the vicinity of Tottenham Court Road, and began stumbling up the dark staircase.

"Can I get a light from anywhere?" inquired Arthur, totally unable to see, and hesitating to follow him.

Just then the door of an apartment close to them was opened, and a woman burst out of it, holding a candle.

"So! you be in for it again, be you? You swore last night as you had no money to pay me; you have got some, it seems, to lay out in drink."

"Will you oblige me by letting me have the use of a light?" cried Arthur to her, in his courteous way.

"You are welcome, sir. 'Tain't as I've objected to lend him lights, but I can't be always a-supplying of him, and not get paid."

"How much is it?" inquired Arthur, putting his hand into his pocket.

"A precious trouble my husband have had of him in his drunkenbouts. That'll be fourteen shillings, sir, altogether."

Arthur placed a sovereign in her hand. "Is any notice requisite? because he will quit your house to-night. You may keep the six shillings in recompense for any trouble he may have been to you."

"Well, sir, there ain't many like you!" exclaimed the gratified woman, after a pause of astonishment; "but you carries the gentleman in your face. Can I do anything else, sir?"

"Oh no. I shall want a cab brought presently, if you have anyone to send."

"Plenty, sir, if you wanted a dozen."

He took the candle from her hand, and followed Robert, who had disappeared upstairs. When semi-intoxicated, Robert was voluble, and would answer what was demanded of him. Arthur roused him up, and he sat on the side of the bed.

"Now, Robert, I have a good deal to ask you, and you must answer me. You had brought sufficient trouble and sorrow upon us without this last act, which I believe will be the means of shortening your father's life. I speak of the forgery," he distinctly added. "Your forging our name, and getting a thousand pounds, and squandering it."

"I was at my wits' end for money," sobbed Robert, "I was desperate."

Arthur made no remonstrance to this. "Are there any more false bills out purporting to be ours?"

"Not one. I swear it. Those three were all."

"How did you so cleverly contrive to imitate our signature?" asked Arthur.

"Oh, I practised it. I wish I could pay you back, but I never shall. I have not a shilling, Arthur; I have not a shilling or a shilling's worth left in the world; and I am next to starving."

Arthur looked round the room. It was devoid of luggage.

"Where are your regimentals?" he inquired.

"Sold."

"And your boxes?"

"Sold."

"And your ordinary clothes?"

"Pawned."

"You are without money, without food, without clothes. Had I not come here, what would have become of you? and what should you have done to-morrow?"

"Drowned myself."

Arthur paused. He was deliberating.

"She's a horrid woman, that one downstairs," said Robert, beginning to ramble on some domestic grievance. "Her name's Huff. She wouldn't make my bed yesterday."

Arthur went to the top of the stairs, and calling to the woman, requested her to get a cab. When it came, he turned to his brother.

"Now, Robert, come down. You are sure you have nothing to remove from here but yourself?"

"No. Where are you going to take me to?"

"Home."

Robert started up. "Home! I won't go home. I won't, Arthur. How can you be so cruel? I will not face my father."

"You would rather do that than face the inside of Newgate," sternly returned Arthur. "It must be one or the other, by your father's orders." He put Robert's hat on his head, and conveyed him down to the cab, Robert resisting as much as he dared.

So Robert and Lionel Danesbury had returned to their father's home. Robert's disgraceful crime was not allowed to transpire beyond the family. He was supplied with suitable clothes; and it was supposed by the neighbourhood that he had only come home for a temporary sojourn. But the supposition was gradually dispelled.

What was to become of Robert? Who was to support him? Was he to live like a gentleman at home, upon the labours of others; or was he to go out into the world and starve? Of course there was but the first alternative. He was unfit for everything; but to keep him from idleness, or something worse, Mr. Danesbury assigned him some light employment in the works.

CHAPTER XII

EVIL COURSES

The months and the years went on, and the names of the young Danesburys became a byword in Eastborough. What was it that was blanching Mrs. Danesbury's cheeks, and rending their father's heart? The boys have become confirmed drunkards! Not occasional ones, as was the case when Robert first went home, but habitual.

One day a farmer residing in the neighbourhood met Thomas Harding, and stopped him. "What's going to become of those two young Danesburys?" abruptly inquired he. "How much longer does Doctor Pratt intend to keep on Mr. Lionel."

"Keep him on!" echoed Thomas Harding. "He is a partner."

"Well, it is Pratt's own look out," returned the farmer; "but if he retains Lionel Danesbury, he won't retain patients. The wife of our carter, Ann Jones, was taken ill yesterday afternoon. My wife had been in to see her, and made her a present of a bottle of brandy, knowing it's sometimes wanted, and had drawn the cork, for the Jones's don't possess a corkscrew, and had put it loosely in, and left the bottle on their kitchen mantelshelf. Mr. Lionel was some time waiting in the kitchen. He spied out this brandy, and said to one of the women that he would take a spoonful of it, for he was thirsty; and she brought him a glass and some cold water, and left him. An hour or so passed: they wondered he did not come back to the patient, who was getting very bad, and one of them went to call him. There he was, lolling on the bench, as drunk as a lord, and the brandy bottle three-parts empty."

"Too far gone to be of use?" muttered Thomas Harding.

"Too far gone for anything. And who would trust to a drunken man? The old doctor was at home and made haste, and was not a minute too soon. But suppose he had not been found, the woman might have lost her life."

"It is very distressing," exclaimed Thomas Harding.

Mr. Pratt was compelled to put away Lionel Danesbury. He dissolved the partnership, and so Lionel, like Robert, was an idle vagabond on the face of the earth. Their evenings were, almost without exception, consumed in drinking, and their mornings were wasted in sleeping off the effects of the liquor. Their mother scolded, and implored, and wept; and their father reasoned, and persuaded, and threatened by turns.

A yearning for amendment would at chance periods come over them. They saw men around them, the play-fellows of their childhood, the companions of their youth, who were fulfilling their appointed duties in the world, honoured and respected; but they knew it would be as easy to turn the sun from its course, as to turn themselves from the ruin they had entered upon.

Their mother would, over and over again, put trust in their word, and pity them, and carry tea or a mess of broth to their rooms in the morning, and urge them to partake of it, to "do them good". They did not turn angrily away from her; but they did from what she offered them. Stealthily they would resort to the ale barrel, and consume long draughts of its contents. Ere half an hour elapsed, they would be as thirsty as before. A tumbler of brandy was what they longed for, but Mrs. Danesbury rigidly kept spirits and wine now under lock and key; though occasionally they would smuggle a bottle in, and hide it in their bedrooms.

Mr. and Mrs. Danesbury became old and grey and broken. Mrs. Danesbury's very nature seemed changed.

Bitter, bitter repentance had taken hold of her. Her grief had led her to the only sure fountain of consolation, where she had never gone in a right way before; and her heart was softening, and things were becoming clear to her. Often and often was the useless wish now wailed forth from her heart, that she had remained Miss St. George, or else been a childless wife.

But about this time there appeared to be a change for the better taking place in Lionel. A little for the better—not much. He less frequently forgot himself; came in earlier at night; and was more careful of his dress; for both he and Robert had fallen into slovenly habits in that respect. The change was hailed with thankfulness by Mrs. Danesbury, who looked upon it as a precursor to reformation. The real cause, however, came to light.

The inn chiefly frequented by Robert and Lionel was the "Wheatsheaf". It was kept by a man named Bing, and his wife, who had brought up their children in rather a superior manner. One evening a gossip went into the "Wheatsheaf" and asked Mrs. Bing if she knew where Kate was.

"She's upstairs," answered Mrs. Bing. "She went up after tea."

"Did she?" quoth the visitor, in a significant tone. "She's not there now, at any rate. She's in the lane yonder, a-walking with young Mr. Danesbury; his arm round her waist, and her hand in his, as snug as two can be."

The visitor left, and Mrs. Bing presently saw Kate come flying along, round the corner of the lane, her cheeks crimson and her eyes bright.

"Where have you been?" demanded Mrs. Bing.

"I wanted a bit of ribbon, and I ran out to buy it," was the girl's evasive answer.

"Now, if you tell me another word of untruth, I'll send you off to your grandmother's to-morrow," retorted Mrs. Bing. "You have been walking in the lane with young Mr. Danesbury."

Katherine hung her head, and the crimson of her cheeks spread over her face and neck.

"Katherine," resumed Mrs. Bing, "it is just ruin, and nothing else."

Katherine stood up, her eye indignant. "Mother! don't say such a thing of me! I don't deserve it. Mr. Lionel wants to marry me."

"Marry, the nonsense! A Danesbury marry one of you! And if he did marry you, it would be ruin, for he is a dreadful drinker. You know he is, Katherine."

"He is leaving it off. He says he shall leave it off quite, and never take to it again."

"You leave off walking with him: that is all you need think about leaving off," retorted Mrs. Bing.

Katherine did not answer. She knew she would break her promise if she gave it, for she had become completely enthralled by Lionel Danesbury.

The news did reach the ears of Mrs. Danesbury, and she taxed Lionel with it.

"Who told you anything about my walking with Kate Bing?" he said.

"The place is ringing with it, and crying shame."

"The place may be swallowed! Let people mind their own business: it's no concern of theirs. Here's my father coming in from the factory: I'll make myself scarce, or perhaps he will begin upon me."

As he went out Mr. Danesbury came in.

"Have you heard the report about Lionel and that Bing girl?" Mrs. Danesbury immediately began.

"I heard it some days ago."

"You must speak to him."

"I did speak to him," replied Mr. Danesbury. "But it appears that it has had no effect; and the report is, that he means to marry her."

"What in the world can possess him?" uttered Mrs. Danesbury, in consternation. "Is he mad?"

If Mr. and Mrs. Danesbury were indignant at this proposed marriage of Lionel's, Bing and his wife were equally alarmed. The unfortunate habits of Lionel were too notorious to admit of any chance of comfort for a wife. Kate was ordered to hold herself in readiness for a visit to her grandmother's; but when the morning rose, Kate was missing. Lionel Danesbury was also missing: and when the two came back to Eastborough, they were man and wife.

Mrs. Danesbury's doors were haughtily closed against them; but Mr. Danesbury, ever merciful, ever considerate to his erring children, who were fast breaking his heart, could not let Lionel starve; and he was established in a small cottage residence, to get what practice he might—Mr. Danesbury being answerable for the rent.

Did Lionel Danesbury amend his ways and drink less now that he had assumed graver duties? Far from any amendment resulting, he grew worse than before, and it was a rare thing now, morning, noon, or night, for him to be seen entirely sober. As to Robert—but the less that is said about him in detail the better.

Poor Katherine Danesbury was sadly changed. She was an excellent wife to Lionel. Mr. Danesbury openly avowed his opinion that she was a far better and more patient wife than Lionel deserved.

They had been married about ten months, when one evening at dusk Lionel's wife appeared at Danesbury

House. She had not chosen an opportune time, for Robert had been causing an unpleasant scene. He had been demanding money of his father, and when Mr. Danesbury refused it, had broken out into a torrent of abuse, both of his father and mother. They were sitting on each side of the fire, Mr. and Mrs. Danesbury, and she was lamenting openly, weeping bitterly.

"Well, Katherine," cried Mr. Danesbury as he pointed to a chair beside him, and there was a painful amount of sadness and suffering in his subdued tone, "you look as if you had something bad to tell."

Katherine burst into tears. She had come to disclose a pitiful tale, and she was grieved and ashamed to be obliged to do it. Mr. Danesbury had given her the money for the rent, for his payments were always made to her, not to his son. She had handed it promptly to Lionel, who had always taken it, as she believed, to the landlord. It turned out now that he had never taken it, but had gone so perpetually with excuses, that the landlord, tired out, had that day put a man in possession.

"I am so ashamed to come, sir," she sobbed, "and tell you such a thing as this, after all your kindness to us. I went to try and get it from my mother, but I find she is gone out for a few days. And he has been so excited ever since the man came in. He seems on the eve"—she lowered her voice—"of another of those dreadful attacks. He is fancying he sees things."

What could Mr. Danesbury do? He wrote a word to the landlord, and the man was instantly withdrawn. But that same night Lionel had to be watched by two men in his dangerous delirium.

Mrs. Danesbury retired to rest, but not to sleep: Robert had come in, and was wandering about the house, his mind unconscious; it appeared more with madness than with wine. What a sound for a mother! Mrs. Danes-

bury had not been to her children all that she might have been, but her affection for them at least was powerful. She had started from some troubled dream in their infancy, and rushed to their cradles, and thanked God that they were safe. *Now* she started from her bed more frequently, not at the imaginary terrors of a dream, but at the bitter stings of waking reality.

Mr. and Mrs. Danesbury rose as usual, and after breakfast the former went to the factory. He came back about midday, too ill to go out again. In the afternoon he was cowering over the fire in the dining-room, for he stood shivering and chill, when Robert came in, his dress loose, and his gait slouching. Though three o'clock, it was his first appearance that day. His eyes were blood-shot, and his countenance bore the marks of his evil life. He had again got into debt, for the third or fourth time since he came home, and had drawn liabilities upon himself which must be discharged, or he dragged off to the county gaol.

"You have brought me to the verge of ruin," gasped Mr. Danesbury, "do you want to complete it? It is not eight months since I paid your debts. I cannot pay away much more. I will not completely cripple the business, so that Arthur shall be unable to carry it on, and be left without resources. No! I have sacrificed enough to you and Lionel, but I will not entirely sacrifice your eldest brother, who never gave me an hour's grief in his life. Rather would I let want and poverty come upon me than ruin Arthur," proceeded the old man. "He has made unparalleled sacrifices for you of his own kind will. He is a brother in a thousand. How much is this money that you are liable for?"

"It's—it's about two hundred pounds," hesitated Robert, ashamed of the confession. "It is not——"

"Two hundred pounds!" interrupted Mr. Danesbury.

“What have you been doing to owe all that? I will not find it,” he sternly added; “I cannot find it. You are reducing me to distress, sir, with your wicked habits. Would you wish your mother there to end her days in the workhouse?”

Mr. Danesbury would not advance the money which Robert demanded; he was firm in that. But he said the liabilities might be brought under his examination, and he would see if any arrangement could be effected towards paying them off by degrees. But he would only do this on condition that Robert entered into no further debts.

With this conciliation Robert was obliged to content himself, and very kind and fair it was. He left the room, too physically miserable to stay in it; and what remedy did he resort to, to cheer himself? He went back to his bedroom, where he regularly kept spirits concealed now, and pouncing upon the brandy bottle, poured out a tumblerful, and drank it, and at the customary evening hour, having set his dress to rights, he slunk out, rather worse than usual for what he had taken.

The clock struck ten. Mr. Danesbury was thinking what a mercy it would have been had God seen fit to remove his two youngest boys in their infancy. Suddenly he heard the latch-key turn in the front door, and Robert staggered across the hall, and came into the room. He reeled up to his father, his attitude menacing. His words were indistinct, but, so far as Mr. Danesbury could gather, they were a demand for money.

“Are these your promises of amendment, Robert? Go to your room; go to your room, sir, and do not speak to me again until you are in a better state.”

He cursed his father with a loud and grievous curse, and dealt him a blow on the temple. Mr. Danesbury fell to the ground, just as Mrs. Danesbury, her fears ever on the alert, ran in.

In rushed a man-servant, followed by Arthur, who had come home just in time to hear the noise.

Arthur and the man got Robert to his chamber, and undressed him, and placed him in bed. But there was no rest for the house that night. His state was akin to madness, and shouting, singing, laughing, and raving, he tore about till morning, Arthur and the servant watching him to prevent mischief.

Arthur cautiously looked in.

"Did you call, Robert?" asked his brother, by way of excuse. "Did you want anything?"

"No. I'm going to get some sleep."

"Ay, do. It will do you good."

Mrs. Danesbury stole on tiptoe once or twice to the room door, but all was quiet within, and she hoped he was sleeping. In a short time Arthur returned with the surgeon. Mrs. Danesbury inquired if he had seen Lionel that morning; if he knew how he was.

"Yes, Lionel is better," replied Mr. Pratt. "He will get over this bout. To think of the evils wrought in this world by the influence of drink," uttered the old gentleman, who bore the appearance of a man of care. "My only son an alien from me! and yours more trouble than if they were aliens."

He had gradually advanced to Robert's door, opened it, and partially entered. But he drew back with a suppressed, hasty movement, closed the door, and kept the handle of it in his hand. Arthur and Mrs. Danesbury had followed him.

"Will you get me some vinegar," he said to the latter.

A suspicion of his meaning dawned on the mind of Arthur Danesbury. "What has he done?" he asked, with blanched lips.

"*He has committed suicide,*" was the dread whisper. "May God have mercy on his soul!"

They went in, Arthur nerving himself to it. He was not dead; but ere the lapse of many minutes he would no longer be numbered amongst the living.

Arthur went outside, awake, even in his despair and horror, to the humanity of keeping Mrs. Danesbury from the room. She was coming along the corridor with the vinegar-cruet in her hand.

"Thank you," he said, offering to take it from her.

"No: I will go in with it myself," replied Mrs. Danesbury.

"Dr. Pratt—Dr. Pratt does not wish anyone to go in," rejoined Arthur.

"But I will go in. Why should I be kept out?"

He soothingly strove to lead her away, but she suddenly raised her foot and kicked open the door, and the scene within was disclosed to her. A long shrill shriek rang through the house, and she fell back into Arthur's arms. It brought Mr. Danesbury out of his bedroom; and the frightened servants came running up.

What expression of horror was it that gleamed from the dying man's eye as he grasped the wrist of his father?

And so, amid piercing throes and mental torments, amid ineffectual efforts to give utterance to his remorse and anguish, he wrung his father's hands with a sharp pressure, and with a last, wild cry, the spirit of Robert Danesbury passed away for ever.

"Oh, my son Robert," wailed out his anguished father, as did David of old. "My son, my son! would God I had died for thee, oh, Robert, my son, my son!"

CHAPTER XIII

HOPES AND FEARS—AN UNEXPECTED EVENT

It was autumn weather, and unusually cold; but the glow of a cheerful fire diffused its pleasant warmth over a commodious bed-chamber, and the gale outside was not felt within. A lady, young and fair, lay there on a sofa. It was Anna Danesbury, William's wife.

In the adjoining room sat a woman before another fire, nursing an infant. It was three weeks old; and very precious was the little life to its mother, for she had not before had a child to live. Suddenly a visitor's knock resounded through the house, and the nurse arose and entered her mistress's chamber.

"Of course, ma'am, you will not see visitors this afternoon," she said. "You are not strong enough for it."

But instead of visitors, it proved to be Mrs. Philip Danesbury, who was scarcely regarded in the light of one.

"Why did Mary not come with you?" demanded the invalid, as her aunt embraced her.

"Because I feared there might be too much chattering," replied Mrs. Philip. "I heard you were not so well as you might be. Mary will come and see you to-morrow. What has been the matter with you, my dear?"

"Aunt," she murmured, in a whisper of emotion, "my husband is going all wrong. It is that which makes me ill."

"Is he worse?"

"A great deal. Someone or other is always calling to induce him to go out in the evening. Sometimes it is Laughton, sometimes it is Lionel."

"I thought William's resolutions were so good!" lamented Mrs. Philip Danesbury.

"He does make good resolutions, and sometimes he will keep them for ever so long. And then again he breaks out, and for several days will not be sober. Did you hear about the loss at the works, Aunt?" she added, dropping her voice.

"No."

"It was all through William. It seems they had a great deal of valuable work in process, and William went in one day in an incapable state, gave wrong orders, and it was spoiled. The loss was some hundreds of pounds."

"Poor Mr. Danesbury! poor Mr. Danesbury!" uttered Mrs. Philip.

"William came home almost like a madman. He did not touch a drop of anything for days afterwards."

"Do you know how the poor old gentleman is, Anna?"

"Much the same, I believe. He was here on Sunday, and I could scarcely keep my eyes from him, he looked so broken with care. Mrs. Danesbury was attacked with influenza some days ago," returned Anna, "and I hear she is very ill."

"She has never got over the shock of Robert's death last spring," observed Mrs. Philip Danesbury.

Anna clasped her hands together. "When I dwell upon Lionel's state, upon Robert's dreadful death, and remember that William may come to the same, my senses seem as though they would desert me."

"Now, do you know?" exclaimed Mrs. Philip; "if you say another word upon the topic, I shall be gone. You are doing yourself incalculable harm."

William Danesbury came home at tea-time, and ran up to his wife's room. He was quite himself. He edged himself on to the sofa, and Anna drew his hand between hers, and held it there.

"Have tea in my room, William," she whispered. "Nurse will make it and send it in for us."

"If you like," he cheerily answered. "When do you mean to get out of this room, Anna?"

"Soon. But I am not quite so strong as I might be. As I should be if—I——"

"If what?" he said, leaning over her.

She whispered: "If I were not so anxious about you."

He could not pretend to misunderstand her, but he strove to turn it off with some disjointed, careless words—that he was all right, and meant to keep so.

"Oh that you would, William!" she murmured. "If not for my sake, for"—she pulled aside her shawl and disclosed a little red face nestled to her—"this child's."

"Do not fear, Anna. I know the responsibility that is upon me. Nay, you must not cry. My dear wife, I will be all you wish me."

Tea was over: the nurse had the baby in the other room, and William Danesbury was alone with his wife. He began to show symptoms of weariness. His wife understood it all. She called him to her. "I was thinking how much I should like to hear *something* read. But perhaps you will not like to read that."

"Yes, I will. What is it?"

"A chapter in the Bible," she said, in a low tone.

William smiled. "I suppose you think that is not much in my line. It is more in Arthur's. I do believe he reads the Bible night and morning."

"As you will some time, William, I hope."

"Well, I will to-night," he said. "Where shall I find a Bible?"

She pointed to her own on the dressing-table, and he brought it forward. "Which chapter?" he asked.

She opened the book at the third chapter of Revelation. William Danesbury read it reverently. To him it was especially applicable: he felt it to be so, and knew why his wife had chosen it.

“ ‘He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

“ ‘To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.’ ”

William Danesbury was closing the book again, when the same servant appeared and called him out. He went downstairs. Anna rang her bell, and her maid came up.

“ Is Mr. Danesbury gone out?”

“ Yes, ma’am.”

“ Gone out!” she could not help repeating.

“ With Mr. Lionel,” added the servant.

When Mrs. Philip Danesbury entered, which she did soon afterwards, she found her flushed, harassed, and excited.

Suddenly they heard the church bell toll out.

“ There’s the passing-bell!” exclaimed Anna. “ I wonder who is gone.”

“ It’s somebody of consequence, whoever it is,” cried the nurse, having returned to make her comments, “ or they would not trouble themselves to ring it out so late as this.”

Another half-hour, and then William Danesbury entered. They heard him come in and go into the parlour.

‘ I will go down and see,’ said Mrs. Philip.

William was leaning over the fire when she entered. His face looked pale and sad.

“ Aunt, how do you do? I heard you were back. I am glad you came in. Of course you have not heard the tidings.”

“ What tidings? we have heard nothing.”

“ Mrs. Danesbury is dead.”

Mrs. Philip was shocked. "Mrs. Danesbury dead!" she uttered after a pause.

"Lionel came here and said his mother was dying, and begged me to go to her without a moment's delay, for she had asked for me."

"Then the passing-bell was for Mrs. Danesbury! What can have caused her sudden death?"

"She has died from this influenza that is going about," was William's answer. "Poor thing! she was sensible, and took leave of us all. Aunt," he added, lowering his voice, "she asked me to pardon her for having forced me to drink wine and beer in my childhood."

"Robert and Lionel have sent her to her grave between them," resumed Mrs. Philip Danesbury.

"Lionel is saying so. I took him home and left him there in a state of excitement that you can scarcely imagine. Crying one minute, talking the next."

"How does your father bear his loss?"

"Calmly. My poor father will not be long after her," he added, with a sigh. "May we tell Anna?" William asked. "Or will it excite her injuriously?"

"Tell her—oh, yes. Her fears and excitement all tend to one point, William."

He knew what that was.

It was a strangely impressive scene that William had come from, one which might suffice for a whole life's lesson:—Mrs. Danesbury lay on her bed, a dying woman; Lionel close to her, the others dispersed round her—her husband, Arthur, and William. Mrs. Danesbury took William's hand in hers: "Forgive me, as I have asked God to forgive me, for having forced you to drink wine and beer in your childhood," she gasped. "William, be you warned while there is yet time; and put them from you."

There was a deplorable scene enacted when she was

being placed in her grave. Lionel was in a wretchedly nervous condition, and was obliged to take brandy ere he could venture to the funeral. As the mourners stood around the grave, Mr. Danesbury at their head, and the coffin was being lowered into it, Lionel seized one of the cords, and broke into a burst of sobbing and wailing. He had to be surrounded and taken away ere the service could be concluded; and that night, for the first time in his life, he was secured in a strait-waistcoat.

All this acted as a warning to William Danesbury, and he strove to master his baneful passion. For some time he kept sober. He stayed indoors in the evening, refused to join any loose friends, meaning those who were lovers of excess, and only took ale with his meals.

CHAPTER XIV

MORE DEATHS

One evening in November, about two months after Mrs. Danesbury's death, William was on his way to Danesbury House. His road lay through the town. Eastborough had much increased of late years, especially in the matter of public-houses and beer-shops.

William Danesbury passed these various houses of entertainment; really with an effort, for sounds of revelry, mingled with the jingling of glasses, came from them, and in one room, where the blind was still undrawn, his eye caught sight of a goodly company. The temptation to enter and make one was very strong on William Danesbury then, but he resisted it and strode rapidly on. In passing Lionel's cottage, he saw an old lady standing at the door. He stopped.

"If you want Mrs. Danesbury," she cried out, "she's

gone out for the doctor. And I am keeping the door for her, and am afraid for my very life."

"Is Lionel ill?" inquired William, guessing whom she was.

"He's in the strangest way *I* ever saw," continued the old lady; "he's fancying he sees cats, and dogs, and devils. He has not been sober, I hear, since his mother died, two months ago."

At that moment Lionel's wife hastened up.

"I have been for Mr. Pratt, sir," Katherine said. "He is out; but they will send him when he returns."

She looked ill, thin, haggard. And no wonder; for besides the anxiety, the harassing life she led with her husband, besides the sleepless nights, and she was often up all night long, she suffered from positive want of food. Lionel's habits ran away with the weekly pound.

"Lionel is ill again," observed William.

"Very ill," answered Katherine. "Will you come up, sir, and see him?"

He followed her upstairs. Lionel was in the bedroom, in his night-shirt, striding about, and looking wild and haggard. William saw what dreadful disorder was upon him again.

"I want my clothes," said Lionel. "She has got them." She had hid his boots.

"I did not dare to leave them in his way," whispered Katherine to William. "He would have been out, and over the town."

"Lionel, you would be better in bed," cried his brother. "Come, get in; and I will go again and see after Pratt."

William laid hold of him. A peculiar tremor was running through all his limbs, the precursor of what was coming.

"Yes—yes," speaking in a wandering, abstracted tone—"yes, I'll get into bed; and you get Pratt here."

He touched the bed himself, and looked wildly about the room again. And just then the surgeon came in.

The doctor administered some medicine, then tucked him up and told him to be quiet and sleep.

"Poor woman!" remarked Mr. Pratt, "she has a dreadful life with him. And this is going to be a bad attack."

"Do you fear so?" asked William.

"Ay. It will be worse than any he has had. His wife must have some men in the house, for before morning he will be outrageous. Mr. William, I will not answer for it that he'll get over this. I did not think he would the last time, when his mother died, you know. I'll look in at George Groat's," added Mr. Pratt, "and send up the men that were here before, if they are to be had."

"I will stay until someone comes," said William.

Later, when the requisite help arrived, three men, William took his departure. When William entered Danesbury House, Arthur was sitting alone.

"Where is my father?" he asked.

"He is gone to bed ill," was Arthur's reply. "I do not think he will be here many weeks, William. If he is no better in the morning, I shall call Pratt in."

"I have just been with Pratt at Lionel's," returned William. "He has got another attack."

"Ah! I heard of his being carried home, unable to walk, the night before last."

"And last night he stole out, and his wife was for four hours looking for him, in the rain, and found him at last on the bridge."

"What a life for her!" uttered Arthur.

"Pratt says he may not get over this."

"Then it will be the death of our father!" sadly exclaimed Arthur.

Lionel Danesbury had latterly been a burthen to himself and all around him, but the end was come. He lay

on the bed, his eyes rolling wildly; cloths steeped in vinegar were covering his head, and the burning fever of delirium was raging in his brain.

Need you be told the name of the malady he was stricken down with? *Delirium tremens!*

Again dawned the morning light upon the patient. It was his last day of life, though he might know it not.

"They keep me here, you see," he exclaimed to Arthur, "and I want to be out. I want to—— Father, is that you?"

It was Mr. Danesbury. Though very near the grave himself, he had insisted on being brought to Lionel's bedside. William was also present.

"That's good," continued Lionel; "I wanted to see you. I'm so hot, you know. Who says I am dying?" he shouted. "You don't think I'm going, do you?"

Mr. Danesbury was taken by surprise; the question was put so rationally. He did not know what to answer.

"Oh, no, no!" reiterated Lionel, with a shriek of anguish that none present would ever forget; "not yet, in mercy! A little respite! A short period for reformation and redemption! It cannot be that I am dying! I must have the time I want first. Yes, I told you God would give it me. Katherine, my poor wife, you say you have been miserable, but we shall be happy now. You need not be afraid of me any longer: I'll keep my promises, and leave it off. William, is that you? Come here, closer. I have had such a horrid dream. I thought I was getting towards the prime of life, and that all the years given to me had been wasted. I won't die, I say. Give me time! Give me time!"

They took Mr. Danesbury from the room; they also took the unhappy wife, for Dr. Pratt saw that the end was at hand. In a paroxysm of violence, more acute

than any which had gone before it, the troubled spirit of Lionel Danesbury flew away to Him who gave it.

Yes! he asked for time, in his half-conscious ravings; but time upon time had been vouchsafed him, and he had used it not!

CHAPTER XV

ONE MORE DEATH—ANXIOUS THOUGHT

The church bell at Eastborough was solemnly tolling as a funeral wound its way from Danesbury House. The chief mourners were Arthur and William Danesbury, Viscount Temple, and Mr. St. George; but many others followed, friends and neighbours, and behind them came the long string of dependants. No noise, no busy sounds of labour or of life arose that day from the Danesbury Works; and every house and shop in Eastborough had its shutters closed, to testify respect to him who was being carried past.

The dark line wended its slow way along through the churchyard into the church. When it came out again, there was scarcely space left for it in the churchyard, or for the mourners to gather round the grave; and there was not a dry eye to be seen; there was not a heart but was lifted up in response to the words of the minister, "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit; that they may rest from their labours."

Back again at Danesbury House, the solicitor produced the will. Upon being opened two letters fell out; one addressed to "My Son Arthur", the other to "My Son William", and were superscribed, "To be read before the will is read."

Each perused his letter in silence, Arthur's face flushing with surprise, William's with emotion. It was supposed to those around that the letters explained to each the motives which had dictated the will.

The whole of the business, and the capital occupied in it, was left exclusively to Arthur. A certain portion of its profits was to be paid yearly to William for five years. At the end of that period he was to be taken into partnership and receive an equal share, *provided that Arthur should deem it expedient*. If Arthur did not, things were to go on as before. There were a few trifling bequests and legacies; and to Katherine Danesbury was secured a suitable annuity in accordance with her original position in life. Danesbury House, with its furniture, except the plate and pictures, was bequeathed to Arthur, and a sum of ready money to William. They both understood, nay, they knew the motives which had dictated the will.

William was striving with all his might to overcome, and the strife was great. For some little time now he had been temperate, only taking beer with his dinner, and a glass of wine now and then, or one glass of spirits. He invariably longed to take more, and there lay the chief strife.

An afternoon or two before they were to quit Eastborough, Lord and Lady Temple were standing at the drawing-room window of Danesbury House, looking at the dusk of night, which was stealing over the landscape.

"Do you know, Isabel, I cannot yet understand it," he said; "so just, so good a man as your father, to leave his sons so differently provided for!—at any rate for five years."

"It is a perfectly just will," called out a voice from the embrasure of the other window, "the will of a just and a good man."

"Who's that? William! is that you? We had no idea you were there."

"Suppose he had constituted me an equal partner with Arthur; given me co-authority and co-ownership; and I were to squander my substance and his; run recklessly to work; go the way of Robert and Lionel? Arthur might be ruined long before the five years were up. It was the kindest will to me that my father could have made. He had my true interest at heart; I know he had, and he told me so in the letter."

"Mr. Danesbury was a man who lived but for his children," said Lord Temple. "But, William, you are not going the way of Robert and Lionel?"

William heaved a deep sigh. "Sometimes I fear I shall have a difficulty to keep from it. One glass of wine, one glass of spirits, sets me on; and then the desire is almost irrepressible. I may almost add, one glass of beer."

"As it used to be with me," said Lord Temple. "You must do as I have done, William: confine yourself to water."

"Do you never take wine?"

"Never," replied Lord Temple. "Since I made my resolution, I have been enabled to keep it. I believe the chief help to my success was the abstaining absolutely: had I tampered with my resolve—'just one glass of wine', 'just one glass of spirits'—I should probably have broken down. I now prefer water."

"You really prefer it?"

"I do. I like it far better than wine or beer, or any other strong beverage you may please to think of."

"Ay," answered William. "The last Mrs. Danesbury taught us to dislike it, and to love beer and wine. Poor Robert and Lionel!"

"Water," said Lord Temple, "remember, is our natural beverage. Try it, William."

Lord Temple left the room as he spoke, and Isabel moved close to her brother and leaned upon his arm. Her tears were falling.

“Isabel! What is it?”

“Promise me, William; promise me that you will throw off this dreadful fascination! Do as Reginald has done. Become what he and Arthur are: a temperate man, in the strict sense of the term.”

“I cannot promise: I do not feel sure of myself, Isabel. I will try, earnestly try, to put a barrier between my inclination and this sin.”

Lord and Lady Temple returned to London, and things went on as usual at Eastborough.

About a month subsequent to the burial of Mr. Danesbury, Arthur, who had been closely confined in the works all day, thought he should be the better for a walk. Putting on his greatcoat, he strolled towards the town.

It was Saturday night. Into the public-houses streamed the people, men and boys, rushing there to drink. Mr. Danesbury stopped one man; he was one of their best workmen.

“Watts, how is it that you cannot make yourselves comfortable at home?”

“Law bless ye, sir! You just step in and look at it, if I might make so bold. There’s the wife all in a muddle, with a great tub afore the fire, a-washing of the children, and the children a-squalling, and the place all in a steam. After that, she sets on to wash the floor, and nobody won’t be able to put a foot on it till it’s dry. I can’t stop in that mess.”

Arthur had nothing to reply. He went on his way, and the man entered the “Cock and Bottle”. All throughout his walk he saw nothing else; men pouring into the public-houses till they were full. He turned down

the narrow, retired path which led to the churchyard.

His thoughts ran, naturally enough, upon the vice of intemperance, and its share in the death of those lying beneath him. Look at what it had done for them!

"If it has brought this amount of evil into one home," thought Arthur, "what must it bring to the world at large? How can it be dealt with?"

How, indeed? The busy and careless world would be astonished to learn the good effected by the exertions of the *Temperance Societies*.

But the good they have accomplished, though astonishingly great, is but little compared with what has yet to be done. For the vice is as a many-headed monster, and it equally behoves individuals, families, and communities to take the matter up with a will and give a helping hand.

All these, and many more such reflections, passed through the mind of Arthur Danesbury as he stood there in the moonlight, leaning over the tomb. How should he deal with the evil; he in his little sphere at Eastborough?

Mr. Danesbury remained long in deep deliberation, pacing the churchyard, dim, undefined plans presenting themselves to his thoughts. He was lost to outward things, when footsteps were heard in the lane, and he emerged from the gate; not caring, possibly, to be seen stalking about amid the gravestones like a wandering ghost. The footsteps proved to be old Thomas Harding's.

"Is it you, Harding? What brings you here?"

"Brown has been to me again, sir," replied Harding; "he is at my house now, and I can't get rid of him, praying and entreating that he may be taken on once more. He says he'll never transgress again; but if he can't get an answer to-night, he'll enlist for a soldier. He says he is starving. I thought it right to come and

mention it to you, sir, lest he should go. What is to be done?"

"His offence was very bad," said Mr. Danesbury, "but—he has a wife and child, poor things. Give him another chance, Harding. He may come on Monday morning."

"I thought perhaps you would, sir. I'm sure you are very lenient to them. Brown says he had been drinking when he did it, and was not in his senses."

"No doubt," cried Mr. Danesbury; "drink is the cause of most bad actions. Harding, my mind was directed to this very point when you came up. If we could but close some of the public-houses!" exclaimed Mr. Danesbury. "Since I have sat on the bench, I have been chary of granting licences, but my brother-magistrates are less so, and my voice is only one amongst many. I wish I could shut up that gin-shop."

"Sir," said Harding—and his words only carried out some of his master's previous thoughts—"if you shut up that, another would open. I was talking last week to the man who keeps it. He answered: folks did drink, and would drink to the end of the chapter. And so they will, sir."

"Ay; although they know the curse it is to them."

"It is a curse both to rich and poor," returned Thomas Harding. "I saw Mr. William in one of the houses as I came along," added the old man, lowering his voice.

Arthur could not answer; he was too pained to answer. He also had been cherishing hopes of his brother.

"Well, sir, I'll go back to Brown, and tell him," cried Harding. "Good night, sir."

CHAPTER XVI

VICTORY

William Danesbury was alone in his drawing-room, on the evening mentioned in the last chapter, when a servant opened the door to introduce a visitor.

"Mr. Bell, sir."

It was a large farmer, residing near Eastborough. The Danesburys were executing some orders of his for agricultural implements, and he had come to inquire on what day one of the machines could be delivered to him. William did not know, but said the overlooker of the department might be able to tell.

The overlooker was not at home; he was gone to the "Ram" to take his glass, and smoke his pipe. Very much indeed did William Danesbury dislike to accompany Mr. Bell there; but again, there was no help for it. Several gentlemen whom William knew were in the parlour; amongst them was Mr. Laughton, once poor Lionel's great friend. Laughton gave a quiet order, and William on looking down saw a glass of brandy-and-water placed before him by the waiter.

"Come, Mr. William Danesbury," cried the farmer, "you shirked it at home, but you can't refuse to drink with a friend now. Take up your glass. Good health to you."

Poor William Danesbury! Never had the desire for it so sorely beset him. He had resisted it in his own house, but here——

William Danesbury took up the glass, and drained it.

Then remorse set in. He saw himself what he was, a weak, guilty coward, a man without self-restraint. He rose from his seat, ready to curse himself.

"Danesbury, you are not going!"

"I must. I have an engagement."

William Danesbury went out into the moonlight. To take the near way to his home he must pass the churchyard; and hardly had he turned into its narrow lane when he met Harding.

"Is it you, Mr. William? I am so glad!"

"I am a wicked idiot, Harding, and nothing else. So don't trouble yourself to be thankful about me."

"Strive on, strive on, Mr. William; victory will be yours in the end. *I know it will*, if you only take the right means to help yourself."

"How can you say you know it, Harding, and assert it so impressively? I am no better than others. Worse."

"Sir," said Thomas Harding, the tears rolling down his cheeks, "I will tell you why I know you will be kept. I was in the chaise with your mother the night she died. In that last moment she offered up a prayer: 'My God, I can but commend my children to Thee. Do Thou make them Thine, and keep them from the evil!' Mr. William, no dying mother ever commended her children to God in vain."

William wrung Thomas Harding's hand with a grateful pressure, and continued his way towards the churchyard. He halted at the gate, and broke into a flood of passionate tears, such as only man can shed.

"My God, teach me to pray. Keep me from the evil, as she asked of Thee; teach and help me to overcome."

Exceedingly surprised he was to hear footsteps close to him, and more surprised still to find they were Arthur's. The latter linked his arm within his.

"How was it?"

"Bell came to my house about his machines, and said he would have some brandy-and-water. I sat by while he drank it, taking none—though it was a sore tempta-

tion. Afterwards we had to go to the 'Ram' to find Sears. Laughton and some more of my old cronies were there; and I was such a weak fool as to be tempted to drink."

"*He* knows, and He is all-sufficient. If you had nothing to overcome, where would be the reward? 'He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son.'"

Almost the same words that his wife, some weeks ago, had caused him to read to her. William wrung his brother's hand, as he had just before wrung Thomas Harding's, and departed to his home.

William took a light and went upstairs to his bedroom; taking his wife's Bible from its accustomed place. He opened it at the Book of Revelation, and his eyes fell on some words.

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

According to their works!

William Danesbury fell on his knees and bowed his head on the book, and sobbed as he had sobbed in the churchyard. Earnestly he prayed; prayed that from that night henceforth he might never return to his besetting sin, but might be kept in his recurring hours of temptation; and in the end, so overcome as to sit down with the redeemed in paradise.

He remembered that he had to go for his wife. His thoughts were still busy as he walked along the road.

His wife looked apprehensively at him. His face was pale, his eyes were red; as she advanced close to him, his breath gave forth an odour she knew too well, and her heart sank within her. As they passed through their

own garden, she exclaimed suddenly: "What a strong smell of brandy!"

"Yes," he replied, "there is. Do you know what I have been doing to-night, Anna?"

"What you ought not," she faintly said. "William, William, will nothing avail with you?"

"I believe that henceforth my strife will not be in vain. Anna! I have never said so much as that."

CHAPTER XVII

VIRTUE'S CROWN

Mr. Danesbury was going to Mrs. Philip Danesbury's. When he arrived there, Miss Heber was alone. She rose when he entered, and extended her hand.

"Did you ever see a more beautiful sunset?" exclaimed Miss Heber.

"I do not know that I have. I was thinking so as I came along."

"I am sorry my aunt is out. She——"

"I am glad of it," interrupted Arthur, "because my visit this evening is to you. I have waited for you long: you know I have, Mary. For though I would not speak until I saw my way clear, I am sure you have never mistaken me. Will you entrust your happiness to my keeping? Will you give yourself to me for all time?"

She burst into tears, and turning half round towards him, suffered him to draw her face to his breast, and hold it there.

He wished that they should be married with but little delay. She objected.

"I am lonely at home: it is a large house for me to inhabit alone," he resumed, with a smile. "But that is

not the chief argument. I want a helpmate, in my new plans, a second self."

"With your workmen?" she asked, looking up.

"With my workmen; my poor, ignorant, improvident workmen. And I want a counsellor, Mary: one to whom I can come for advice and help. I want you."

"I will be all I possibly can," she answered, the tears glistening in her eyes: tears of joy. "And I will do what I can for the workpeople."

"There is much to do, much to be effected."

"Will it be effected?" returned Miss Heber.

"Not perhaps as I could wish it to be. But a great deal may be done—I feel that it will; we shall both bring earnestness and hope to the rescue."

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It was a lovely day in June; the sun shone on the green trees, and the blue sky was without a cloud. All East-borough, high and low, rich and poor, had gathered round the church, save those who had been able to get inside it, for it was the marriage-day of Arthur Danesbury and Mary Heber. In deference to the recent melancholy deaths in the family, the wedding was as quiet as possible.

Just as lovely a day, only hotter, arose a month later, in July. Preparations were making for a feast at Danesbury House. A large tent was erected in the adjacent field, and tables upon tables were set out in it, for all the workmen and their wives were to dine there, and spend a joyous holiday. A few intimate friends were expected from the neighbourhood, and the first to enter was Mrs. Philip Danesbury. Following close upon her came William and his wife—William with a clear, bright countenance, very different from what it used to be. Mr. Danesbury, calm, noble, kind as ever, met them on the steps.

When all had arrived, they sat down in the dining-

room to a slight midday meal, cold, with chocolate and coffee. Arthur presided. His fair wife, truly a helpmeet for him, both in person and mind, sat at his right hand, Lord Temple beyond her, and Isabel on the other side of Arthur. They were all anxious to know how the "scheme" worked, Mr. St. George being especially eager, not to say satirical in his inquiries.

"Mr. Danesbury was wise enough to hit upon the right course when he bound the men to him for a whole month," interposed Squire Hanson, a neighbouring gentleman and a magistrate. "I had my doubts about its succeeding: I confess it; for I was in his confidence almost from the first: but I am rejoiced to be able to say that my doubts have been dispelled, and his hopes realized."

"At the month's end," said Mr. Danesbury, "they had become, most of them, reconciled to the change: they could not fail to perceive the great benefit it was to their minds, their bodies, and their pockets." Mr. Danesbury paused; but none interrupted him, and he resumed.

"At the month's end, I bargained with them for another month: I knew it was useless to demand, or attempt, too much at first; for our fellow-men must be led, not driven. I spoke to them, as I had spoken at the outset. After touching upon the advantages of the plan, which had then become obvious to themselves, I said, 'Will you be my guests for one more month, and oblige me? but, remember, if you enter upon the month, you must complete it.' Nearly all assented."

"Nearly all?"

"I think there were seven or eight only who did not. I will say this," resumed Mr. Danesbury, "that since the men have been brought into contact with enlightened conversation and intelligence, their minds, short as the time is, have opened in a remarkable degree."

"I can tell you, better than anybody, how the scheme works in private," cried out old Mr. Pratt, "and that's first rate. There have been no beating of wives since the master's house of entertainment was opened, nor calls upon my sticking-plaster."

"The next improvement we intend to have a try at," observed William Danesbury, "is to make them water-drinkers in their own homes at midday."

"When my wife shall have persuaded the women into rendering their homes something like homes, which she will set about forthwith," interposed Mr. Danesbury.

"And not pigsties and scolding dens," put in the old surgeon.

"One good result the plan has effected," resumed Squire Hanson, "is that two public-houses and three beer-shops have been already obliged to shut up, lacking customers."

There was a pause. It was broken by Mr. St. George.

"Now that Mr. Danesbury has had his say, I must have mine. Do you know, sir, that when the report of these doings, this wild scheme, reached town, you were looked upon by practical, matter-of-fact men, as being a little touched here?"

Mr. St. George tapped his forehead as he spoke, and his keen eyes twinkled with merriment.

"I dare say it was so," laughed Arthur.

"Why—it's a completely Utopian scheme altogether, you know, Danesbury. There's so much of the ideal in it."

"The ideal!" repeated Arthur; "you must mean the real. Many and many a British master, employing numbers, has opened a place for his men in an evening, where they find lights, fires, and appropriate literature

to while away the leisure hours. My father opened a reading-room; but it did not take. In what does my plan differ? save that I take a personal interest in it, and give them coffee and bread-and-butter."

"Ah!" said Mr. St. George, shaking his head, "I fear it is that coffee that has done it."

"In two senses of the word," returned the magistrate, laughing. "Done the men out of their evening beer, and done Mr. Danesbury out of his reputation as a sane man."

"I could not think of anything better, and I honestly confess that, were it now to fail, I do not know that I could devise any better plan. It was an uncertain venture, but it was worth the risk."

"It will not fail now, Mr. Danesbury," said Squire Hanson.

"I don't fancy it will, squire," observed Mr. St. George. "The binding down the men to attend; that binding down accomplished the business. But this will be a pretty cost out of your pocket, yearly," he added to Arthur.

"Not very much. Little, indeed, in comparison with the welfare of so many souls. Ought I to begrudge it to them from my ample means?"

When they rose from luncheon, Lord Temple linked his arm for a moment within that of William Danesbury.

"Let me have a word with you, William," he said, "Is it all serene? Isabel declares it is. She says she can read it in your face."

"Quite. For six months I have touched nothing. I begin to wonder now at my former marvellous infatuation, and at the difficulty I experienced in tearing myself from it. I can truly say I have conquered."

"It was difficult at first."

"Ay," answered William, with a deep breath, "it verily was difficult. But the difficulty is over."

Arthur Danesbury had given his arm to his wife, and was proceeding to the tent. The guests followed. A hearty English dinner of roast beef and plum pudding had been disposed of by its occupants, but their drink was water, succeeded by a cup of coffee. Tea, with ample accompaniments, was to come in the evening. It was the first meeting of master and men since the former's return: they rose in a body, and their acclamations rent the air. Mr. Danesbury held up his hand for silence.

"My men, I am delighted to see you all again," he began, in his cheering way. "I hope; I trust"—he looked from one table to another affectionately—"that the time will come when you will all spend your evenings with me, without one exception. I say with me, because I shall often look in upon you. Some amongst you," he added, "still remember my mother. My good women, I speak now to you."

Yes, many did. They looked up eagerly.

"And you remember that she was all kindness to you; she would have been ever so, had she lived. But she is gone, and others have gone, and there is now another Mrs. Danesbury, my wife, whom I hold upon my arm. She will be to you and your families what my mother was. She is anxious to be so, to befriend and help you all; and I know that you will welcome her for my sake, until you have learned to welcome and love her for her own."

A deeper shout than ever filled the tent.

"Oh, my dear friends," concluded Arthur Danesbury, with solemn earnestness, "listen to my counsel, for it is born of anxiety for you. By the exercise of a little persevering self-denial, you will find great reward. I will

do what I can to encourage you to exercise it. God—all-merciful God—is looking down upon us; now, as I speak and you listen; He is waiting for you to choose the good and reject the evil; waiting to aid all who ask for His help.”